MAY 1982
$2.00

MONTHLY REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

VOLUME 34
1

Rural El Salvador: An Eyewitness Account

PHILIPPE BOURGOIS

The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century

HARRY BRAVERMAN

Agricultural Mechanization in the Third World

FRED MAGDOFF

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTENTS

VOLUME 34 NUMBER 1 MAY 1982

REVIEW OF THE MONTH: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century
by Harry Braverman 1

WHAT U.S. FOREIGN POLICY FACES IN RURAL EL SALVADOR: An Eyewitness Account
by Philippe Bourgois 14

PROS AND CONS OF AGRICULTURAL MECHANIZATION IN THE THIRD WORLD
by Fred Magdoff 33

BOOKS: The Struggle for Control of the World Capitalist Economy
by Samir Amin 47

CORRESPONDENCE:

Doctors and Socialized Health Care in Québec
by John Osterman 55

Reply to Osterman by Errol Black 61

MONTHLY REVIEW (ISSN 0027 0520) is a publication of Monthly Review Foundation, Inc., a non-profit institution. It is published monthly except July and August, when bimonthly, and copyright 1982, by Monthly Review, Inc. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. POSTMASTER: Send all address changes (Form 3579) to Monthly Review Foundation, 62 West 14th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011.

EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS:
62 West 14th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011. Telephone: (212) 691-2555.
Europe: R. Handyside, 47 The Cut, London, SE1 8LL. Telephone: 01-261-1354.
Giro Account No. 557 6350.
MR Edizione Italiana: viale Oracio Flacco 15, Bari 70124. Telephone: 241919, 246157.
MR Greek Edition: 52 Themistokleus str. and Kolleti str., Athens 145, Greece.
Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTOR:
B. De Boer, Inc., 113 E. Centre Street, Nutley, N.J. 07110.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE:
U.S.: One year $18, students and senior citizens $13; Foreign $22, students and senior citizens $15.
Libraries and Institutions: U.S. $30; Foreign $33.
Additional Postage: First Class (U.S. and Canada) $9; Airmail: Central America and Mexico $11; South America and Europe $16; Middle East, Greece, Asia, Africa and Australia $20.

EDITORS: Paul M. Sweezy Harry Magdoff Leo Huberman (1903-1968)

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Bobbye Ortiz

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

As we go to press sales of *Protest and Survive* have reached the 13,000 mark. This is good for an MR Press book, but it is far below the potential of what organizers of the anti-nuclear arms movement quite generally regard as the most effective piece of educational literature available to them. One of the most difficult problems is getting bookstores to stock and display the book, and it is here that readers of MR can play an important role. Most of you live in communities with one or more bookstores. The individuals responsible for ordering (and re-ordering) books, many of whom are themselves involved in or sympathetic to the antinuke movement, are not necessarily well informed about the available literature. We suggest that you contact these people personally, tell them about *Protest and Survive*, explain that you and many others are urging friends and acquaintances to buy and distribute the book, and strongly urge

(continued on inside back cover)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE DEGRADATION OF WORK IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

BY HARRY BRAVERMAN

This article is a slightly edited version of a talk given by Harry Braverman in Spring 1975 at the West Virginia Institute of Technology. As far as we know this was his last recorded presentation. The Editors

My topic this evening is the "degradation of work in the twentieth century," and there is one firm generalization with which we may begin that is, that humanity is a working species. Our relationship with nature is not merely one of food-gathering or seeking shelter in the crevices provided ready-made by nature. Rather humanity takes the materials provided by nature and alters them into objects more useful to itself. Humanity works in order to live, to provide itself with the means and provisions of life. Thus even though men and women often have occasion to complain of work as a constraint laid upon the species, there is never any doubt that work as a species characteristic is as natural to human life as grazing or hunting are to other species. But it would be the greatest of all possible mistakes to take any simple truisms of this sort, whether in the form of Biblical laments or biological and evolutionary constraints, as the direct basis for an analysis of work in modern society. Between biology and sociology, civilization - with all of its social relations and institutions -- intervenes. In capitalist society, which is the society in which we live, work is organized

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in institutions that have long since separated us from simple production for our own use and indeed have as a basis for their activity something very different from *any* kind of production for use.

The purpose of a capitalist enterprise, as we know it, is to use the surplus that may be extracted from the process of production. Thus while humans work to provide for their needs, in capitalist society nobody works who does not at the same time provide for the needs of capital. It is only by creating a surplus for the corporations that we obtain permission to create necessities for ourselves. In capitalist society this is rule no. 1, or if you like you might call it Catch 22. Whatever you call it, it is the underlying law of the system.

Now it's true that there have been other forms in which ruling groups extracted a surplus for themselves from the working population. In slave societies the masters directly appropriated the labor of others. In feudal societies the rulers took from the produce of others what they themselves required under rules that obligated the peasantry to surrender to the manorial lord a portion of their product or of their labor. Thus it has been said of feudalism that the nobility defended all, the clergy prayed for all, and the commoners fed all. But in capitalist society the manner in which a surplus is extracted is very special and has had during the past 200 years the most extraordinary consequences. The foremost of these is that the capitalists have taken into their own hands the direct control over all processes of labor and production; and this in itself constitutes an enormous change from anything that has existed in previous societies. In previous societies the work of artisans or of that immense mass of the population then engaged in crop or animal husbandry as farmers, peasants, and serfs was as a rule conducted autonomously. So far as the direct processes of labor are concerned, the artisans or peasants worked according to traditional methods generally under their own control. It is only under capitalist conditions that the masters take over the entire process, repeatedly reshape and reorganize it to suit their own needs, and parcel it out as tasks to workers for whom the process as a whole is now lost.

Labor that has been subjected to these conditions is some-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

times referred to as alienated labor. Now this is a vague phrase, and its vagueness has increased with its popularity. Indeed, we may suspect that its present popularity in official sociology and popular journalism is dependent upon its vagueness. In their usage its connection with the specific conditions of capitalist social relations and capitalist production has all but disappeared, and alienated labor is understood to mean merely the worker who suffers from a feeling of distress, a malaise, a belly-ache about his or her work. But the term may still be useful if its significant content is restored and clearly understood.

It must be understood first of all in accordance with the prime definition of the verb to alienate, that is, to transfer ownership to another. The ownership of the tools and instruments of production is in capitalist society alienated, that is, transferred to others. The ownership of the product is alienated in the same sense. The same applies to the ownership of the proceeds from the sale of the product, and finally the process of production too is alienated. It too is transferred to alien control and becomes the property of others. In the end, everything about the productive process becomes alien to the worker in the sense that everything is outside his or her interests, claim, and control — the wage becomes the sole equity of the worker in the job.

Thus in capitalist society production is carried on in an atmosphere of hostility or indifference by a mass of workers who have lost all stake in or concern for the process, and this in turn makes necessary certain extraordinary means of control and management. It is thus that management for the first time comes into existence and is brought into the world by capitalist society. This necessitates ever more extraordinary means of control and management as well as an ever more alienating reorganization of the work of production, so that we have here an alienation which feeds on itself and becomes ever deeper until it emerges as a profound antagonism between those who work and those who manage them. In this situation it is not at all surprising that work is seen as a curse — what is surprising is only that it is tolerated at all. The manner in which this step-by-step alienation of the process of production from the worker has developed historically is too large a subject to be dealt with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in any short presentation. Suffice it to say that it existed only in exceptional instances in ancient and medieval societies; that it grew rapidly in the workshops of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries during the rise of early capitalism, that it became generalized in the workshops and factories of the nineteenth century, and that it has become virtually universal in the factories, mills, warehouses, offices, farms, wholesale and retail establishments, hospitals, offices of public administration, and even to some extent in the schools of the twentieth century in the countries of fully developed capitalism.

Now once capitalists take control of the process of production, they seek out every means whereby the output of the worker will be increased so that an ever larger surplus may remain with them. At first this was accomplished by prolonging the working day, but in more recent times intensive methods have replaced extensive ones. This means the reduction of the labor time required in the production process, and it means also the cheapening of labor power. How is labor power cheapened? There are a variety of ways. By far the most important in modern production is the breakdown of complex processes into simple tasks that are performed by workers whose knowledge is virtually nil, whose so-called training is brief, and who may thereby be treated as interchangeable parts. In this way the requirements of production are satisfied not through small pools of highly skilled labor in each craft but by labor of the simplest sort. The consequence is that for most jobs the whole of society becomes a labor pool upon which to draw, and this helps to keep the value of labor power at the level of subsistence for the individual or below the level of subsistence for the family.

In speaking in this way about the capitalists or the corporate organization of capitalism it is not my intention to assault them personally as conscienceless or to malign them. Taken as a class they are no doubt, like all of us, only what society makes of them. But this is precisely the point - we must deal not with the capitalist as a person but with the way the capitalist mode of production operates and the conduct it enforces upon the capitalists themselves. After Henry Ford introduced the moving conveyor (between 1912 and 1914) as the means of sub-assembly and final assembly of automobiles, none of the hundreds of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

automobile firms then in existence could hope to continue long in business without adopting this process. From the moment the first food-retailing organization adopted self-service methods of shelving and checking out commodities in its stores, no food-retailing organization could hope to prosper or perhaps even to survive without these methods. Or, to take as an instance a process that is just now getting underway, every office manager now understands that since the means have become available to segregate secretarial work in specialized production units connected to executive offices by modern telephonic and recording equipment, no office employing a large number of scattered secretaries can long afford to neglect this innovation; and many are beginning to reorganize secretarial work as the office equivalent of factory production work.

Thus the tendency of the capitalist mode of production from its earliest days some 200 or 250 years ago to the present, when this tendency has become a headlong rush, is the incessant breakdown of labor processes into simplified operations taught to workers as tasks. This leads to the conversion of the greatest possible mass of labor into work of the most elementary form, labor from which all conceptual elements have been removed and along with them most of the skill, knowledge, and understanding of production processes. Thus the more complex the process becomes, the less the worker understands. The more science is incorporated into technology, the less science the worker possesses; and the more machinery that has been developed as an aid to labor, the more labor becomes a servant of machinery.

Although there is a general impression, which is fostered by official academic and journalistic opinion, that all of this is happening because of the rise of scientific technology and the development of machinery, this process of degradation of work is not really dependent upon technology at all. It will be remembered that this mode of the organization of labor arose in the workshops of early capitalism at a time when modern technology did not exist. One need only read Adam Smith's description of the division of labor in pin manufacture to see that the key to the matter is the organization of labor. In modern industry the worst examples of the division of labor are still found chiefly in those processes which exist in the gap left open

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by technology, those things which cannot be mechanized or cannot be economically mechanized by the capitalists at the prevailing rates of pay. Let us just remind ourselves that one of the most abominable forms of labor, the one in fact that is often mistakenly taken as an instance of the horrors of modern machinery, the assembly line, is just such a case — it has little or nothing to do with machinery since it is a hand process of the crudest sort, its technological feature being merely a primitive device for hauling the work past the worker. Even this device is dispensable, and dispensed with, in the case of smaller and lighter units of production which can be pushed along the work tables to the next station. As a rule, however, the powered endless belt or chain conveyor is favored by management not just as an aid to labor, but chiefly because it enables management to control the pace of production.

Modern technology in fact has a powerful tendency to break down ancient divisions of labor by re-unifying production processes. Adam Smith's pins, for example, are no longer made by a worker who straightens the wire, another who cuts the length, a third who fashions the heads, a fourth who affixes them to the pins, a fifth who points the pins, a sixth who tins or whitens, another who inserts them into the paper, and so on. The entire process is re-unified in a single machine which transforms great coils of wire into millions of pins each day already papered and ready for sale. Now go back and read Adam Smith's arguments for the division of labor, arguments having to do with the dexterity gained in the constant application to one operation of a hand process over and over again and so on. You will notice that this modern technology has made a complete hash of these arguments. Not one remains with any force today. The re-unified process in which the execution of all the steps is built into the working mechanism of a single machine would seem now to render it suitable for a collective of associated producers, none of whom need spend all of their lives at any single function and all of whom can participate in the engineering, design, improvement, repair, and operation of these ever more productive machines. Such a system would entail no loss of production, and it would represent the re-unification of the craft in a body of workers far superior to the old craftsworkers. Workers can now become masters of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the technology of their process on an engineering level and can apportion among themselves in an equitable way the various tasks connected with this form of production that has become so effortless and automatic.

The division of labor in a capitalist society, however, has to do with many other things besides the pace of production, which in most cases would not be injured if it were wiped out. It has to do, as Charles Babbage pointed out in the early nineteenth century, with differential pay rates, which dictate that the ignorance of the great masses of the workers and the concentration of all engineering knowledge in a few specialists are desirable and, in fact, essential conditions rather than, as it would seem from a human point of view, an abomination. Thus the capitalist mode of production enforces upon new processes devised by technology an ever deeper division of labor no matter how many possibilities for the opposite are opened by machinery. In this way two worlds of work are created: the world in which a very few managers and engineers grasp the process as a whole as their special monopoly, and the world of scheduling clerks, inventory clerks, timekeepers, machine tenders, machine repairers, stock chasers, forklift operators, warehouse attendants, and so on, each of whom performs simple labor in service to a complex machine and each of whom is expected to make a working life of from forty to fifty years out of these scraps of duties, none of which can engage the interests or capacities of a mature human or even of a child for more than a few weeks or a few months, after which they become sheer and mindless drudgery. Thus we may say that while production has become collective and the individual worker has been incorporated into the collective body of workers, this is a body the brain of which has been lobotomized, or worse, removed entirely. Its very brain has been separated from its body, having been appropriated by modern management as a means of controlling and cheapening labor power and labor processes.

We have briefly considered the production process. Let us turn now to its outcome. Let me say at once what cannot be denied and what is in fact capitalism's chief historic role. This unremitting drive on the part of the capitalists to extract an ever greater surplus from the working population, a drive in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which the immense powers of science and technology have been enlisted in the service of the accumulation of capital, this drive has brought about an extraordinary development of the human powers of production. The productivity of labor and hence the surplus which it makes available for further expansion have risen most remarkably in the developed capitalist countries. The owners of the corporations never tire of reminding us that they require great surpluses if they are to constantly enlarge the scale of production, and this is quite true. No change of social system can do away with it as a technical fact. If production is to grow, a portion of the product must be reinvested in the process of production rather than consumed at once. This we may treat as a natural law, but it is no natural law that this surplus must become and remain the property of a tiny ruling class. This is rather a law of capitalism, and as a result of its workings there has been an immense accumulation of property at one pole of society, greater than at any time in human history.

How about the working population, by which I mean that portion of the population excluding the managers and the proprietors of industry and even excluding those somewhat privileged intermediate strata in professional occupations and in middle management who today make up what might be called a new middle class? The remaining mass, which I have called the working population but which one might call labor or the working class, this remaining mass which constitutes perhaps three quarters of all employment in the United States, is described in the census and in Labor Department statistics under six headings: craftsworkers, operative and kindred workers, laborers, clerical workers, service workers, and sales workers. Here we find close to 60 million out of the approximately 80 million persons, including owners, counted by the census of 1970 as among the working population, and here too we find those jobs characteristically of the sort which I have been describing. Now earlier in this talk I noted that the reduction of the typical job to the level of a few simplified tasks is one of the chief means of cheapening labor power, and I added that this helps to keep the value of labor power at the level of subsistence for the individual or below the level of subsistence for the family.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lest this be thought an exaggeration, let me now substantiate it with estimates based upon the pay scales for workers in all of these six classifications in 1971, and official estimates of the cost of maintaining a family of four above the poverty line in that same year — and it's worth noting that the situation since then can only have gotten worse, not only because of the economic crisis, but also because during these four years inflation has outstripped wages, thus lowering real wages. Some 80 percent of service workers and workers in retail trades did not receive enough pay to support a family of four above the poverty level. The same is true of at least 75 percent of all clerical workers and laborers, both of whom are paid on about the same level, the laborers maybe a little higher than clerical workers. It is also true of close to 70 percent of all operatives and kindred workers. Only craftsworkers earn in their majority enough to lift a family of four out of the officially defined poverty category, and even in this grouping the wages of 40 percent, if used to support a family of four, were below the poverty level.

Now, one result of these earnings levels is that very large numbers of families do live below the poverty level; that a big majority of families is not put in that position is due only to multiple job-holding within the same family. This we know. But what I am trying to highlight is the startling fact that a pretty large majority of the jobs in the economy have now been transformed by the workings of the capitalist division of labor into the kinds of work one usually thinks of as second jobs, the mythical pin-money jobs which women and teenagers are supposed to be the only ones to take to supplement the major family income. The result is that most of the people, whether they are supplementary earners or heads of households, now occupy such so-called second jobs with their pitiful and demeaning duties and meager pay. That this is so is due not only to the kind of division of labor we have been discussing, but also to the occupational and industrial shifts which have resulted from the accumulation of capital in the United States.

Let me try to make this clear. In striving to economize on labor time, the corporation is also striving to reduce the number of workers required for a given quantity or output, or — and this comes to much the same thing — to produce a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rapidly growing output without a proportional growth in the number of workers. To use Marx's memorable way of putting it, unlike the generals who win their wars by recruiting armies, the captains of industry win their wars by discharging armies. The practical consequences of this can be seen in any analysis of United States employment in the manufacturing industries over any reasonable period of time. Thus in the United States between 1947 and 1964, a seventeen-year period, the output of the textile industries grew by more than 40 percent but employment was cut by one third. Other industries, such as iron and steel foundries, lumber and wood products, malt liquors, and footwear, showed production increases of from 15 percent to 40 percent in the same period, accompanied by employment drops of 10 percent to 25 percent. The petroleum industry poured out five sixths more product at the end of the period than at the beginning, but its employment was one fourth lower. Even the construction industry, which by the nature of its production processes is notably resistant to technological change, doubled its output while adding only 50 percent to its labor force. Only the most rapidly growing industries showed substantial increases in employment. Thus electrical machinery and motor freights added respectively 50 percent and 70 percent to their employment, but in the process they roughly tripled their output. The aluminum industry more than doubled its employment, but this was the result of a quadrupled output. An extreme case is that of air transport, which enlarged its output some eight times while increasing employment by only one and one third times.

Now, the figures that I have been giving you deal only with a seventeen-year period; but, taking a much longer-term view, you can very clearly see the trend by focusing on the changes in manufacturing and related industries like construction. For at least a century these industries occupied close to half of all non-farm employment, usually between 45 percent and 50 percent. But after the 1920 census, about fifty years ago, this began to change; and by the time we come to the most recent census, that of 1970, these industries occupy only one third of non-farm employment. There has therefore been an immense shift of labor out of the traditional manufacturing, mining and construction, and transportation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

industries into the very rapidly growing areas of real estate, insurance, finance, services, and wholesale and retail trade. But these rapidly growing fields of industry are precisely the low-wage portions of the economy; while the higher-wage sector is the stagnant or declining portion. None of this is accidental; there are profound structural reasons why the most rapid growth of capital has taken place in the low-wage areas and also in the enlargement of nonproductive as against productive work. In any case, this trend is not a matter for doubt, and it is this trend – along with the rapid growth of the lowest-wage occupations, such as clerical, service, and retail trade – that in good measure accounts for the fact that we live increasingly in an economy of so-called second jobs and that true first jobs in the traditional sense – jobs that are rewarding in themselves and pay enough to support a family – are fewer than ever.

If the captains of industry win their war, as Marx put it, by discharging armies, how do we know that the rapidity of the accumulation of capital will keep up with it and that new products, services, or unproductive industries will develop rapidly enough to absorb all of the labor freed by the capitalist drive for higher productivity? Well, we do not know, and in fact in capitalist society there is always a pool of unused labor power, an industrial reserve army. It has almost always been a very sizable mass in United States industrial history, at least during this century. And it shrinks to a small size only on these rare occasions when the upswings in the business cycle are unusually strong and correspond as well to longer-term upswings in the process of capitalist accumulation, especially during wars.

Apart from the natural growth of the population, the freeing of workers from their jobs by the continuous revolution in production creates, again to use Marx's words, a disposable industrial reserve army that belongs to capital quite as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost. If we try to verify this from the United States statistics we run up against the difficulty that unemployment figures are kept on very different principles from those embraced by the concept of the industrial reserve army, but these statistics nevertheless have the value attaching to any set of figures that is kept on more or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

less constant principles over a long period of time. The most striking thing to emerge from an examination of the unemployment statistics from the Second World War to the present is the long-run trend of gradual but persistent enlargement of the pool of officially counted unemployed. There has been throughout this whole period a business cycle, so that the line is a jagged one, but even so it is a line which constantly trends upward. The levels of unemployment, which at the start of the period meant recession, are now regarded as perfectly acceptable prosperity rates. I clipped from yesterday's *New York Times* an article with the headline "High Joblessness Expected to Persist as a Condition of United States Throughout the Decade." This article points out that although we began immediately after the Second World War aiming for an unemployment rate of 2 percent or 3 percent, we soon gave this up, that the 4 percent unemployment target embraced by President Kennedy in 1962 has been abandoned, and the 5 percent goal of the Nixon administration economists has also lost support. Most economists today, regardless of their political affiliation, believe that 5.5 percent to 6 percent of unemployment is probably the lowest the government can achieve without stirring up virulent inflation again, and even that modest target is a long way from attainment — 1979 at the earliest. In other words, the target for unemployment and prosperity nowadays is higher than what was regarded as a recession rate of unemployment only twenty-five years ago.

Now I said a moment ago that these unemployment rates are not the same as the concept of an industrial reserve army, the latter being much larger. This is because the measuring of unemployment is a relatively restrictive count. Let me give you a very graphic instance of this: when the unemployment figures for February of this year were released a month or two ago, they proved to be about 8.3 million, only slightly changed from the 8.2 million counted as unemployed in the previous month of January -- but we were told at the same time that employment had *fallen* by a full half million persons. How do we explain this paradox? Well, the answer that they give is that in official parlance almost 600,000 persons had dropped out of the labor force between one month and the next. What does that remarkable statistic mean? It simply means the following:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

since capitalism does not recognize that every able-bodied adult has either the responsibility or the opportunity to work and contribute to society, the theory is that one cannot distinguish the unemployed from the leisure class except by asking the individual whether he or she had been actively seeking employment during the previous four weeks. Those who cannot show that they have been doing so – and in the largest majority of cases this would mean those who have given up hope of getting a job – are no longer counted as part of the labor force and hence cannot be counted as unemployed. Nothing in official statistics distinguishes them from the housewife who has never worked or from the millionaire in Palm Springs. Thus there is clearly a large mass of non-working people who constitute a reserve army of labor, only a portion of which is counted. Those who rise to the surface in active search of jobs are counted as unemployed; those who sink to the bottom and are forced onto the welfare roll are counted as paupers. The size of this pauperized mass is now between 14 and 15 million persons, and this enormous size was attained back in 1970 and bids fair to go much higher. From all of this we can see that the accumulation of wealth which takes place at one pole of society in the capitalist sytem is matched at the other pole by an accumulation of misery.

This working class lives a social and political existence of its own, outside the direct grip of capital. It protests and submits, rebels or is integrated into bourgeois society, sees itself as a class or loses sight of its own existence, in accordance with the forces that act upon it and the moods, conjunctures, and conflicts of social and political life. But since, in its permanent existence, it is the living part of capital, its occupational structure, modes of work, and distribution through the industries of society are determined by the ongoing processes of the accumulation of capital. It is seized, released, flung into various parts of the social machinery and expelled by others, not in accord with its own will or self-activity, but in accord with the movement of capital.

– Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHAT U.S. FOREIGN POLICY FACES IN RURAL EL SALVADOR:
AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

BY PHILIPPE BOURGOIS

> Peoples are like volcanoes; no one can ignite them. They explode on their own, and Central America . . . [is] . . . volcanic territory.
>
> Fidel Castro, July 19, 1980.
> (Speech given on the first anniversary of the Nicaraguan Revolution.)

> Very simply, guerrillas, armed and supported by and through Cuba, are attempting to impose a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship on the people of El Salvador as part of a larger imperialistic plan. If we do not act promptly and decisively in defense of freedom, new Cubas will arise from the ruins of today's conflicts.
>
> Ronald Reagan, February 25, 1982.
> (Speech given to the Organization of American States, Washington, D.C.)

The ideological hegemony of Cold War analysis blinds U.S. foreign-policy makers to the reality they are determined to eradicate. Ever since the Truman administration, foreign-policy rhetoric (and practice) has been redundantly consistent. U.S. leaders are victims of their own propaganda. They categorically assert that all Third World national liberation movements are devoid of genuine, indigenous, popular support.

Philippe Bourgois is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University. He received his B.A. at Harvard College in 1978, an M.A. in Anthropology at Stanford in 1981, and an M.A. from the Food Research Institute (Agricultural Economics) in 1980. This article is a slightly revised version of a paper presented at the Tenth Annual Conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, D.C., March 3–5, 1982.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Revolutions are automatically treated as plots masterminded – or at least manipulated – by a clique in the Kremlin.

This ideological dogmatism prevents the United States from accurately assessing the strength of popular movements. This was as true for U.S. policy toward China, Vietnam, Iran, and Nicaragua as it is for El Salvador (and Guatemala) today. It is what is forcing Americans to relive Indochinese history in Central America as the Reagan administration pursues to its illogical conclusion the military solution to the civil war in El Salvador that the Carter administration initiated.

For 14 days, November 11–24, 1981, I was forced to witness in excruciatingly gory detail exactly how mistaken State Department analysis of El Salvador is. Trapped with one thousand Salvadoran peasants in the northernmost portion of the Department of Cabañas, I fled with the noncombatant population under heavy aerial bombardment and ground attack from Salvadoran government forces. I saw that the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) is a formidable political-military reality in northern Cabañas precisely for the reasons that might make it appear militarily weak. It is a largely illiterate, barefoot, malnourished mass of mostly unarmed, unhealthy, self-educated peasants who feel they are the chosen people of God in the process of shaping history. Their strength lies in the fact that any outside aid they may or may not be receiving is completely irrelevant to their existence.* Their movement is fully indigenous, ill-supplied, and nonprofessional. It responds, however, to their needs and ideals because it arises out of them; therein lies its strength.

Guerrilla versus Civilian—A False Dichotomy

When I entered the 30-square-mile FMLN-controlled territory (planning to stay 48 hours) I naively wanted to examine the relationship between the civilian peasant population and the

*In Cabañas I saw no evidence of outside aid to the FMLN. I should qualify my analysis by emphasizing that northern Cabañas is not necessarily a typical FMLN-controlled zone. In fact, it is a relatively marginal region politically, militarily, and economically. My remarks therefore, are not unilaterally applicable to the entire Salvadoran struggle. Furthermore, at the risk of falling into ahistorical idealism or voluntarism, I have limited myself to addressing the realm of ideology and – to a lesser extent – military logistics among the revolutionary peasants. A serious attempt to examine the social, material basis for the struggle or the crucial dynamic of the emerging political structures requires a separate essay.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fighters. It was soon obvious that there is no such thing as a "relationship" between "guerrilla" and noncombatant because everyone is revolutionary. Those whom the North American press calls guerrillas are called *muchachos* or *compañeros* (kids or companions) by the Salvadoran peasants. The fighters are the 18- to 25-year-old men and women who happen to be carrying the guns simply because they are the most agile runners and the sharpest sharpshooters. The 65-year-old barefoot grandmother, however, considers herself as vital to the struggle as her 18-year old grandson or his two-month-old baby girl.

The Military versus the Political—Another False Dichotomy

From a strictly military point of view, this lack of differentiation between civilians and fighters is disastrous because the mobility of the fighters is reduced by their obligation to protect the slower runners, the elderly, the infirm, and mothers carrying children. During the entire 14-day odyssey, therefore, the FMLN had to maintain at all times a ring several miles wide around the civilians to prevent government soldiers from catching up with and killing them. The fighters are unable to go out on sorties and ambushes. Had the noncombatants not been present the fighters, who had the tremendous logistical advantage of growing up in the area, could have run circles around the government troops and inflicted heavy casualties.

The young FMLN fighters know every nook and cranny of the terrain because they began "preparing" for guerrilla warfare as barefoot children, when they chased lizards and rabbits for fun and food. There is no need, therefore, for them to be trained in Nicaragua; many of them do not even know where Cuba is, and may never have heard of the Soviet Union. In fact, probably the only time they ever left their home county was to pick cotton during the harvest season on the plantations in the lowlands.*

*I talked with several young peasants who had picked vegetables or fruit as undocumented workers in the southwestern United States. All of them had been deported. One of them actually managed to save several thousand dollars. He bought a small herd of cattle upon returning to his natal village in Cabañas in 1978. His livestock were massacred by paramilitaries during one of their raids in 1979, prompting him to join the FMLN forces, which at that time were just beginning to organize formally in the region.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Because of their commitment to protecting the civilians, however, the fighters are not able to make full use of their superior command of the terrain. I made the mistake of asking one of the FMLN fighters why the civilian population had not been evacuated to refugee camps or some other neutral region during the calm months prior to the invasion. He looked at me as if I were crazy: "Ah, *compañero!* You do not understand. Without the warmth of the masses we would be a band of militaristic adventurers. We need constantly to be reminded who and what we are fighting for."

Politically it is indispensable for a people's army to maintain organic ties to the noncombatant population. The political, of course, cannot be separated from the military if a popular prolonged war is to be successful. In addition to the political importance of constantly being in the process of constructing the new social order one is fighting for, the combatants also -- quite humanly - need the love and support of their family and friends in order to maintain their morale. As one of the senior leaders of the FMLN, Cayetano Carpio, explained in a recent interview: "Weapons are not the only factor in this conflict,...a popular war that has been going on for over ten years, pitting the army against the people, and engulfing the whole country." (Boyer 1982: 1)

There is a powerful mystique involved in guerrilla warfare, something the State Department will never be able to admit since it is committed to the notion of conspiracy, so well articulated in all its simplicity by Secretary of State Haig: "First and foremost, let me emphasize...that our problem with El Salvador is external intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign State in the hemisphere -- nothing more, nothing less. That is the essential problem we are dealing with." (Cited in White 1982: 19)

Another, more concrete effect of the presence of large numbers of noncombatants* is to motivate the fighters to persevere to the bitter end, because the intent of the government on these military operations is to annihilate all form of life -- human, animal, and vegetable - contained within the targeted region. The fighters, therefore, are protecting their grand-

*I estimate ten civilians for every fighter.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

parents, siblings, and children from being murdered and possibly tortured and raped by the invading troops. Consequently, a handful of these ragged hungry peasants with tattered sandals and a couple of dozen guns, no matter how rusty, is worth a platoon of heavily armed, fully uniformed draftees fighting under U.S. trained officers. They know exactly what they are fighting for: their own survival and that of their loved ones.

Logistics: Guns, Bread, Butter and Discipline—or Lack Thereof

At first I was shocked by how poorly supplied the FMLN was in Cabañas. Although I suspected the State Department of exaggerating their claim that there was ". . . a systematic, well-financed, sophisticated effort to impose a communist regime in Central America" (State Department 1981: 217), I had no idea just how wild their fabrication actually was. I was unable to evaluate systematically the arsenal of the FMLN, since I spent my time with the noncombatants and only saw the fighters when they passed through on patrol or to check on the health of one of their family members. I did not, however, see any of the "nearly 800 tons of the most modern weapons and equipment" that the State Department said "key officials of several Communist States" had committed themselves "to supply to the insurgents." There was not even a residue remaining of "the covert delivery to El Salvador of nearly 200 tons of those arms, mostly through Cuba and Nicaragua." (*White Paper* 1981: 1) In short, they were poorly armed.

The paucity of arms in Cabañas is especially significant because the region borders on Honduras. According to the map provided in the State Department's *White Paper* the "primary overland route" is through Honduras. Cabañas therefore, due to its geographic location, should be overflowing with guns. Above all the FMLN fighters in Cabañas had Second World War carbines and G-3 rifles. These are the weapons carried by the government paramilitary organizations with whom they are in most frequent contact, and who are the easiest to ambush. The FMLN also had some M-16 and FAL semiautomatic rifles; the same kind that are carried by the regular government troops. They had nothing large enough, however, to shoot down the Huey helicopters that were strafing us or the Fouga-Magister planes that were bombing us.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Guns and – even more important – ammunition are their limiting factors in combat. I estimate that with unlimited military material in Cabañas, they could have fielded at least twice as many fighters. Guillermo Ungo, president of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), asserted: "We lack weapons, not people.... If the hundreds of tons of arms claimed by Washington had reached us, we'd have an army of 50,000 people...." Such an assertion appeared plausible based on what I saw in Cabañas. (*New York Times* 1982: 8) In fact, occasionally one would see patrols of several young men pass by with only one or two carrying weapons. Presumably the unarmed came along to pick up the gun when one of their companions fell in combat.

The lack of professionalism of the fighters was at times almost worrisome. Once again, however, when understood in the context of a prolonged popular war, this "amateurism" becomes a source and symptom of strength. In a nutshell, the FMLN in Cabañas is an irregular peasant army. Only months ago, many of the fighters were landless laborers on the infertile plots of small landowners who treated them worse than cattle, because indeed they were less "valuable" than the livestock. This area had been characterized by a quasi-feudal system whereby the peasants gave obligatory days of labor ("días de compromiso") in return for access to eroded plots. All of a sudden these same "peons" found themselves in positions of leadership and discipline.

The hardest aspect of this new-found lifestyle to become accustomed to was giving orders. A Cabañas peasant in the past never told anyone what to do. Any favors or requests were alluded to diplomatically through a complex semiological structure of traditional peasant face-saving devices. I actually saw a peasant, who was pointed out to me as one of the head military figures, stop the patrol he was leading, stare at the ground and mumble: "Ahhh...excuse me compañero Ricardo, would you...ahh...errr...mind doing extra guard duty tonight?" This is the kind of person (according to President Reagan) who is "attempting to impose a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship on the people of El Salvador as part of a larger imperialistic plan." (Reagan 1982: A14: 6) Of course this particular leader might actually consider himself to be a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Marxist-Leninist (he also might not) but his practice is certainly not "dictatorial" or foreign-inspired.

The fact that an FMLN leader (at least in the Department of Cabañas) was incapable of barking out military orders is an asset to the struggle in the long run. It means that the leadership arises directly out of the local peasant population. The leaders think and act as true peasants. The structures and forms of organization and survival that are forged during the fighting, therefore, respond organically to the necessities and psychology of the local populace. In other words, Reagan could not be more mistaken when he accuses the revolutionary movement of being "not of our hemisphere" and appeals to those who have "turned from their American neighbors and their heritage. Let them return to the traditions and common values of this hemisphere." (Reagan 1982: 14: 4 and 6) Reagan missed the point entirely. The FMLN fighters in Cabañas could not possibly be any more indigenous or any closer to the "traditions and common values" of their communities.

Another major military weakness of peasant armies that nevertheless ensures an integral tie to the traditional community is that they are noisy. They are accompanied by screaming babies and playful children who do not obey orders. Discipline, to put it mildly, is lax. The biggest problem when we were hiding from the government air force and foot patrols during the day was the crying of suckling babies — not something that can be hushed by an order. The breast milk of the mothers was drying up due to lack of food and combat trauma. All we could do was watch the squalling infants slowly dehydrate before our eyes.

The absence of pain killers and the inadequacy of medical supplies was also a serious problem. The moans of pain of the wounded could not be stopped; rags were stuffed in the mouths of those in the worst agony. Any such noises, of course, could have revealed our location to the government foot patrols who were searching for us. In fact, on the first night of the flight when we ran through the lines of encirclement that the government forces had tended around the 30-square-mile region, our position was detected due to the sound of the crying babies which the troops actually fired directly into in the darkness of the night.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Role of Pain and Death in Political Consciousness

This physical suffering and the unimaginable cruelty of the government troops (imagine firing into the sound of shrieking babies!) only served to make the fighters more determined to protect us. They did not hesitate to take risks or to push themselves beyond normal limits of endurance. One fighter was particularly incensed. His wife had been killed on the first night of the flight and now there was no one left to breast feed even to a minimal extent his two-month-old baby girl or to take care of his two-year-old baby boy. He kept coming in from the battle zone to visit his children, tears of anguish in his eyes. If someone like him had not been politically determined to overthrow the Duarte regime prior to the offensive, now he certainly was. Virtually everyone in Cabañas has lost a family member or close friend. The FMLN slogan "Victory or Death!" takes on a new meaning when one has lost loved ones and witnessed so much tragic suffering. The term "genocide" almost becomes understatement rather than hyperbole. One can distinctly feel oneself losing any formerly held fears of death in a crescendo of outrage. Sorrow becomes transformed into concerted action, and personal concerns of well-being pale in comparison with the suffering of an eleven-year-old girl whose infected left foot has to be amputated with anesthesia, or an eight-year-old boy who has to be held down with a rag stuffed in his mouth while mortar shrapnel is removed from his legs. (He died two days later).

This determined outrage was only confirmed to the peasants on the night we re-entered the 30-square-mile region from which we had fled and came upon the naked body of a middle-aged woman. Her clothes had been ripped off and apparently acid had been poured on her skin because it was bubbling off. The body had been left in a prominent position along the path, presumably to terrorize any survivors. The effect of terrorism, however, is the reverse. Given the concrete alternative of fighting back together with an organization they can trust, the peasants become an even more effective and determined fighting force.

When I saw that mutilated body, I could not help thinking of the statements of Haig *et al* on "international terrorism." The State Department is correct; a great deal of terrorism is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taking place in El Salvador today - but the U.S. taxpayers are financing it.

A State Department official in Washington, D.C. told me that I had to put the horrors I had witnessed in the context of the "cultural history" of El Salvador, which has always been rife with violence and suffering. His implication was that North Americans should not apply the same standards of human rights to El Salvador that they do to their own country. Somehow, the Salvadoran peasants are "used to it." His "historico-cultural analysis" is reminiscent of General Westmoreland's statement at the height of the Vietnam war, alleging that one had to "understand the oriental mind"; they do not "perceive death and suffering the way we do." This logic, aside from being despicably racist, blinds the State Department to the single most radicalizing phenomenon: government repression and terrorism as breeders of armed resistance.

God and Armed Struggle

Given the inhumanity of the paramilitary and government soldiers, the struggle of the peasants against the military becomes a question of common sense. Their sympathy for armed insurrection arose directly as a response to repression initially directed against the church. They explained that approximately four or five years ago priests began entering the region, preaching the new gospel of the "preferential option for the poor." The message was simple: it is harder for a rich man to go to heaven than it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle; Jesus Christ was poor; he loves the poor; do something to alleviate the suffering inflicted upon you by the rich. . .etc. The government then sent hit squads to kill the priests and those who were organizing in the catechist programs ("delegados de la palabra"). The peasants responded with their hunting rifles and pistols. After a number of years of this incipient armed resistance/defense, they organized formal structures of the FMLN.

Fueled by this deep root in the revitalized Catholic church, there is a strong messianic bent to the philosophy of life and political conceptions held by the revolutionary peasants. They articulate their world view in terms of the Bible (using imagery, above all, from the Old Testament) and the homilies of the late

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, assassinated in March 1980 while saying mass. In fact one of the refugee camps in Honduras is named after the slain Archbishop, but the Honduran authorities took down the sign-post on the grounds that Romero is a subversive figure.

This profound religiosity is most eloquently expressed in the poems and songs written by the peasants.

> I am a poor wanderer
> Fleeing from El Salvador
> Don't know where I come from
> All I know is here I am
> And only God who is always with me
> Knows what I'm headed toward.

Their compositions are systematically punctuated by biblical references. The Salvadoran government troops are referred to as the "Pharaoh's sons," and the Honduran troops who occasionally collaborate in the clean-up operations along the border, are the "Pharaoh's relatives." Many of the *noms de guerre* that the guerrillas assume are taken from the Bible; Moses is the most popular. Perhaps the most poignant of all the poems I collected was written by a 46-year-old peasant called "Hercules" in commemoration of his son, who had recently died in combat. In addition to its religiosity the poem illustrates well the determination and political commitment that can grow out of the tragedy of loss:

> Oh you who showed us so clearly
> what the struggle is about
> From heaven you listen
> to our prayers
> Oh my dearest son
> How many nights of prayer
> have you led us through?
> But we are happy
> because you are in heaven
> and your destiny
> was to be a good guerrilla fighter
> Your memory will always remain
> in the heart of your companions
> Revolution or death
> The people armed will triumph

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Intellectual/Emotional Metamorphosis of the Peasant

Despite the physical suffering they endure and the grief over lost loved ones the peasants of northern Cabañas have been actualized emotionally and intellectually. They have acquired a new sense of self-worth and dignity, all without losing their traditional humbleness. In a matter of one or two years they graduated from being the most despised creatures on earth (i.e., landless or land-poor laborers, giving obligatory days' worth of labor to overbearing landowners) to becoming the leaders of history: the people the Bible prophesied about. They feel honored to die for their cause because before its advent they had been half dead – and it hurt. The words of the Salvadoran poet Roque Dalton ring true in Cabañas:

> Let us unite all of us, the half-dead
> In the name of the murdered
> Let us unite against the murderers
> of all
> Against the murderers of the dead
> and the half-dead
> All of us together have more death
> than they have
> But together all of us have more
> life than they
> The all-powerful union of our half-lives
> of the half-lives of all those born
> born half-dead
> in 1932
> Every day the dead are less docile
> . . . . . .
> These dead are different than in the old days.
> They ask questions
> It seems to me that they have begun to realize
> that they are the majority. (Dalton 1974: 125)

Ridden with amoebas, unemployment, and alcoholism, the peasants had a great deal more than just their chains to lose. One of the organizers of the local movement, a peasant born and raised in the region, explained to me: "Initially my consciousness was raised through parish work. We used to be macho [*machista*]. We used to put away a lotta drink and cut each other up. But then the Organization showed us the way, and we've channeled that violence for the benefit of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

people." This is a phenomenon that U.S. government foreign policy analysts will never be able to take seriously. If they did, they would lose their jobs or be referred to psychiatrists.

"At the risk of appearing ridiculous. . ." The revolutionary mystique I was exposed to in Cabañas is well summed up by Che Guevara in his statement: "The true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love." (Guevara 1968: 398) By assigning strictly cynical and devious motives to its enemy, the U.S. renders itself incapable of analyzing and combating it effectively. The revolutionary peasants, on the other hand, in character with their idealistic conception of human nature, are guilty of overestimating the humanity of their enemy. For example, on the eleventh day of the flight, our position had once again been detected by the air force and a Huey helicopter was spewing forth a barrage of machine-gun fire. I found myself next to an older man cowering for protection by the side of a tree trunk. He whispered in my ear in the midst of the firing: "Isn't it too bad Reagan's not here? Wouldn't he be sad too if he saw this? Will you tell him about it?" Luckily the bullets from this particular strafing did not hit home.

The Ineffectiveness of U.S. Strategy

Given that the United States is committed to a military solution, is their current strategy the most effective? In principle (scorched earth) yes, in practice no. The Cabañas military operation was called "one of the most successful of the war" by General José Guillermo García, the minister of defense of El Salvador. (United Press International 1981a: 8: 1) He said it was spearheaded by elements of the Atlacatl Battalion, trained by U.S. military personnel. (United Press International 1981b: 7: 1) The American Embassy has been equally unequivocal in its praise for the Cabañas invasion. Carol Torfline, press aide at the embassy in San Salvador has been proudly telling reporters: "All the Salvadoran military's operations in 1981 were failures except for the Cabañas operation which was a big success." *(Personal communication from a North American journalist.) Indeed, in Cabañas the

*I estimate that at least 50 civilians were killed and 50 wounded. The FMLN claims they lost three fighters. Colonel Sigfrido Ochoa who directed the invasion

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

government troops succeeded in blowing up many women, children and elderly, that is to say, the slow runners and those who did not hit the ground fast enough when a mortar or grenade exploded nearby. The Duarte regime's troops, however, were not able to hold the zone long enough to finish burning the huts and destroying the granaries and bean fields. The FMLN returned to the area as soon as the military withdrew, and set to work reconstructing the ruins. They succeeded in retaking all but one or two of the hamlets they had formerly controlled. There was enough grain hidden to feed the fighters and the sympathizing populace until the next corn harvest.

Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, the leader of the Nationalist Republican Party which obtained 30 percent of the votes in the March 28 elections for the Constituent Assembly, is logically consistent, therefore, in calling for the use of napalm to pacify the peasants. He calmly asserts that it may "justifiably" be necessary to kill 100,000 to 200,000 people to bring "peace" to El Salvador. (Cooper and Lovler, 1982: 119: 1) The current military campaign is not reducing the strength of the FMLN. On the contrary, if anything it strengthens them. Because of the cruel law of survival of the fittest, the population of Cabañas is becoming a more mobile, effective, fighting force with each subsequent invasion of the government forces. Furthermore, through ambush and because of the disorganized retreats of the Salvadoran military, the rebel forces are steadily building up their arsenal of U.S.-supplied weapons. Of course the D'Aubuisson strategy of systematic scorched earth does not represent a feasible alternative because it would lead to the polarization and regionalization of the conflict, radicalizing presently nonrevolutionary sectors in Honduras and possibly even Belize, not to mention Guatemala or Nicaragua. D'Aubuisson may indeed destabilize the dominoes.

Occasionally the State Department will condemn the simplistic military approach and pay lip service to the need for social and economic reform. More often than not, however,

---

boasted that between 350 to 400 guerrillas were killed out of a force of 1,500. (Christian 1982: 22A) In my estimation there were not more than 100 fighters and 1,000 civilians living in the entire region. The Colonel also assured reporters "... with a steady look from green eyes, that... excesses do not occur under his command. 'We are not permitting any outrage against the civilian population.'" (*Ibid.*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they fall back, when challenged, on the conspiracy-theory slogans, or wallow in self-contradiction. For example, in his February 26, 1982, address to the Organization of American States, Reagan contradicted an entire section of his speech emphasizing the "economic disaster" of Central America and the Caribbean, by boasting that "the markets of the Americas have already produced the highest standard of living among the advanced as well as the developing countries of the world." (Reagan 1982: 14: 1) In fact, of course, it would be calorically impossible for the standard of living of the peasants of northern Cabañas to fall any lower. Reagan's "magic of the market place" has brought the peasants only malnutrition and humiliation.

Reagan's ideological rigidity and the consequent logical inconsistency of his analysis pale in comparison with the extremist statements of some of his political appointees. For example, Jeane Kirkpatrick, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, has actually condoned (if not praised) in print the violence of the death squads. (Kirkpatrick 1980, cited in Cockburn 1982) In a paper prepared for the American Enterprise Institute, after eulogizing the "political culture of El Salvador, [its] strength, machismo, competition, . . . shrewdness, assertiveness . . . and a certain 'manly' disregard for safety," she cites John Stuart Mill on order, invents her own corollary definition of heroism (i.e., heroes are people who make a special contribution to highly valued goods), and concludes: "Hernández Martínez is such a hero. . . . [He] ruthlessly suppressed the disorders [the 1932 uprising], wiping out all those who participated, hunting down their leaders. It is sometimes said that 30,000 persons lost their lives in this process. The traditional death squads that pursue revolutionary activities and leaders in contemporary El Salvador call themselves Hernández Martínez Brigades, seeking thereby to place themselves in El Salvador's political tradition and communicate their purposes."

U.S. Intelligence

One would think that U.S. foreign-policy brokers would be too intelligent and well-informed to believe their own public statements, but it appears that they do. In any case, whether or not they believe their rhetoric, they act upon it. How is it pos-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sible that the nation with the most sophisticated information-processing technology and with virtually unlimited resources to pour into intelligence gathering has so completely misunderstood the reality of the Salvadoran civil war?

One of the reasons is that the messenger bearing bad news is shot. Policy determines intelligence reporting, not vice versa. This has been a long tradition in the U.S. intelligence community. Perhaps the most notable example is the resignation of Jesse Leaf, chief CIA analyst for Iran. He was berated by his superiors for suggesting that the Shah was a "megalomaniac pipsqueak," sowing the seeds of popular dissidence. His realistic reports were suppressed or toned down before delivery to Washington. (Hersh 1979: 3: 1) The State Department even managed to dismiss the reports submitted to them in 1978 by the Israeli Embassy which argued that the conservative Islamic clergy were the greatest danger to the Shah. (Szulc 1979) As late as August 1978, the CIA was still reporting that "Iran is not a revolutionary or even prerevolutionary situation. Those who are in opposition, both violent and nonviolent, do not have the capability to be more than troublesome." (Cited in Szulc)

It appears that the U.S. government does not want to hear and - more important - is incapable of believing that thousands of unarmed civilians can believe so fervently in an ideal and be so economically desperate that they are capable of walking into the fire of tanks and machine guns. The same was true of Nicaragua. Up until the spring of 1978, the CIA was dutifully reporting that the Sandinistas did not have mass popular support. (Szulc 1979)

The same blinders affect the view of the Salvadoran situation. On December 11, 1981, three senators wrote a letter to the CIA complaining that a briefing given by Constantine Menges, one of the CIA's leading Latin American experts, "evidenced a rhetorical tone and selective use of information that bordered on policy prescription." Senator Tsongas actually walked out of the briefing and told Menges he considered the presentation "an insult." (Associated Press 1981) Apparently even Foreign Service officers oppose the Reagan Administration's military (*cum* elections) strategy. A Foreign Service officer working at the embassy in San Salvador admitted to me

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that he and his associates advocated a negotiated rather than a military solution. This internal dissension has not fazed the ideologues in Washington. An anonymous U.S. Embassy official in San Salvador told the *New York Times* recently: "The State Department treats the reporting from here as if the embassy were filled with people feverish from a local virus." (Hoge 1981: E2: 2)

Most likely, if the State Department were to read this paper they would attempt to discredit it as a product of the "worldwide propaganda networks of Cuba, the Soviet Union, and other communist countries." (White Paper 1981: 2) At best they might dismiss the author as a misguided academic who has romanticized terrorism. They would merely be doing their job of reinforcing ideological hegemony: we are good, they are bad. In this manner they dutifully deny the existence of the grave they are conscientiously digging themselves.

Bibliography

Associated Press
1981 "Three Senate Democrats Criticize Briefing by CIA on Caribbean." *Washington Post*, December.

Boyer, Roger
1982 "Coptering Salvador." *New York Times*, February 9, editorial page.

Christian, Shirley
1982 "Although He's Won Battle, Commander Must Win Peace." *Miami Herald*, March 14: 1, 22.

Cooper, Marc and Lovler, Ronnie
1982 "Election Eve in El Salvador," *Village Voice*, March 30: 7, 119.

Dalton, Roque García
1974 "Todos." *Las historias prohibidas del pulgarcito*. Mexico: Siglo XXI.

Guevara, Ernesto Che
1968 "Man and Socialism in Cuba," in *Venceremos: The Speeches and Writings of Che Guevara*. John Gerassi, ed. New York: Simon and Schuster, pp. 387 400.

Hersh, Seymour
1979 *New York Times*, January 6: 3: 1.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hoge, Warren
1982 "On the Scene and Often on the Spot in Salvador." *New York Times*, February 28: E2: 2.

Kirkpatrick, Jeane
1980 "The Hobbes Problem: Order, Authority, and Legitimacy in Central America." Unpublished manuscript prepared for the American Enterprise Institute. (Cited in Cockburn, Alexander. "Their White Paper... and Ours." *Village Voice*, March 30, 1982: 7, 8.)

New York Times
1982 "U.S. Accused by Salvadoran." *New York Times*, March 22: 8: 4.

Reagan, Ronald
1982 "Transcript of President's Address on Caribbean Aid Program." *New York Times*, February 25: 14: 1.

Szulc, Tad
1979 *New York Times Magazine*, July 29: 13 33.

State Department
1981 "Department of State Bulletin (April and May)." *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War*. Marvin Gettleman *et al.*, eds. New York: Grove Press, pp. 6 9.

United Press International
1981a *"Mata el ejército a 152 guerilleros y ocupa dos campamentos rebeldes." Diario las Américas*, November 20: 8: 1.

1981b *"Ejército de El Salvador encuentra resistencia." Diario las Américas*, November 29: 7: 1.

White Paper
1981 "Communist Interference in El Salvador." Special Report No. 8. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

White, Robert
1982 (ms) "Prepared Statement of Robert White Before the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs, Committee of Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives." Washington, D.C., February 23.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

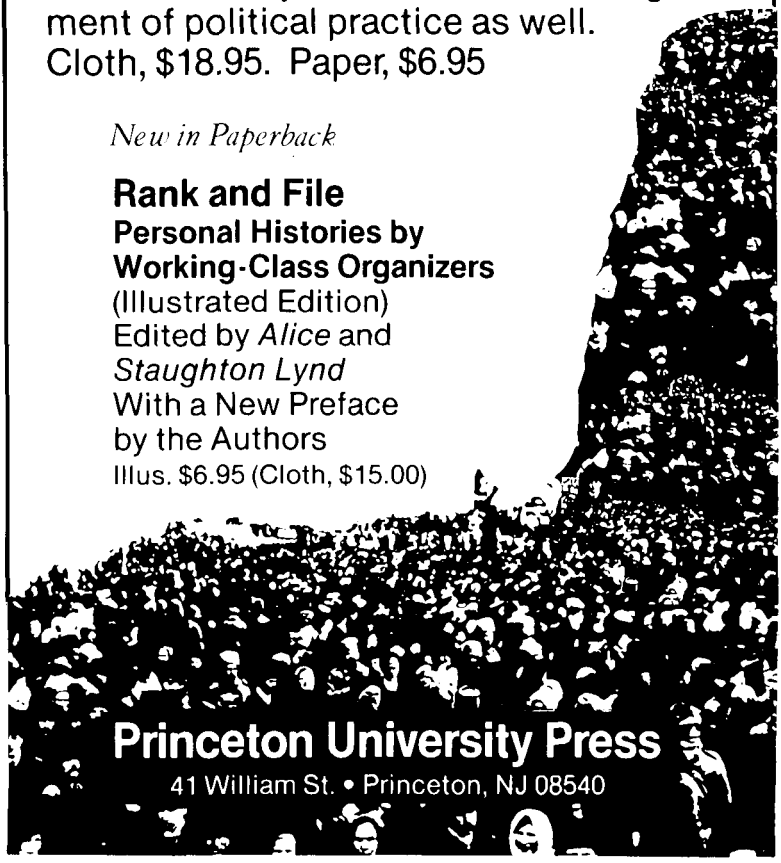
Capital and Exploitation

John Weeks

Is Marxian theory relevant today? John Weeks shows that it is by demonstrating how it can be used to develop an explanation for the current economic and social crises that grip the capitalist world. The book contributes to the development of Marxian theory as well as to the enlightenment of political practice as well.
Cloth, $18.95. Paper, $6.95

New in Paperback

Rank and File
Personal Histories by Working-Class Organizers
(Illustrated Edition)
Edited by *Alice* and *Staughton Lynd*
With a New Preface by the Authors
Illus. $6.95 (Cloth, $15.00)



Princeton University Press
41 William St. • Princeton, NJ 08540

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION For An AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Why And How To Build The Movement of the '80s

American Manifesto

Includes:

- ★ Naming the Enemy
- ★ Towards a New Self-Governing America
- ★ The Right and Duty of Revolution
- ★ Revolution or Counter-Revolution: Our Choices Narrow
- ★ Creating the Movement & Building the Party

"Presses us beyond the politics of reaction, protest and complaint. Should be studied and tested by concerned women and men of every color and condition in this nation."
—*Vincent Harding*
There is a River

"I especially like the connection with the American Revolution and the vision of a self-governing America."
—*Harry Boyte*
The Backyard Revolution

"The message is that none have escaped the cultural contamination of capitalism, racism, sexism, and ageism."
—*Geneva Smitherman*
Talkin' and Testifyin'

Revolution and counter-revolution both involve upheaval. The revolution creates the future; the counter-revolution seeks to maintain the present or create the past. The counter-revolution narrows and limits human beings, whereas a revolution expands and enriches human identity.
—*James and Grace Lee Boggs*
Revolution and Evolution
In The 20th Century

National Organization For An American Revolution

P.O. Box 07249
Detroit, Michigan 48207

Please send me _____ copies of the **American Manifesto** (in English; in Spanish) at $2.00 each. Enclosed is my check for $_____. Please make checks payable to **NOAR** and include 50 cents postage per copy.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

For A Free Brochure describing our publications, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PROS AND CONS OF AGRICULTURAL MECHANIZATION IN THE THIRD WORLD

BY FRED MAGDOFF

There is much that needs modernizing in traditional agricultural practices of the Third World. In some countries relatively simple changes, such as the substitution of metal implements for wooden hoes and plows, or the use of rubber tires on wheelbarrows and carts, may make a great difference. There are many areas where more efficient drainage of wet soils and/or irrigation of dry soils, better weed control, more use of improved varieties and fertilizers, different crop rotations, and erosion-control practices would significantly improve crop production and farmer welfare. Included in the vast array of possible modernizing techniques is the increased use of mechanical means (as contrasted with human and animal power) to work the soil, plant seeds, harvest crops, irrigate fields, etc. While the mechanization of agricultural production has tremendous possibilities, it also contains pitfalls. This article will explore what mechanization does and how it influences the soil, crop, farmer, and society.

Governments of developing countries frequently view mechanization of agricultural production as a very important and progressive goal. China has begun a major effort to mechanize agriculture. A 1979 editorial in *Remin Ribao* states:

It is China's new policy to concentrate on accelerating the mechanization and modernization of its agriculture. As China's

Fred Magdoff is professor of soil science at the University of Vermont.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

industrial foundation is still weak, the limited funds and materials we have must be used in a well organized and well planned way to ensure that farm production is equipped with complete sets of sophisticated machines that are cheaply manufactured and can stand wear and tear.

Third World governments have various reasons for following this course. Sometimes there is a desire to lessen the drudgery of rural life. Many agricultural tasks in a peasant economy are repetitive, boring, and physically taxing. Freeing rural labor for other jobs in industry is sometimes part of the attraction of agricultural mechanization. Even more important, it is commonly believed that mechanization is one of the important ways to expand agricultural production. For example, the Mexican government's announcement of the importation of 5,000 tractors in 1979-1980 implied that mechanization would increase agricultural productivity, the food supply, and farmer incomes. But the belief that mechanization must necessarily lead to a greater food supply and improved farmer welfare is, in my opinion, erroneous.

The drive toward changes in agricultural methods in the Third World is stimulated by "powerful forces that are pressing for mechanization of all kinds. Large farmers, foreign and domestic industrialists, politicians, and even aid agencies have vested interests in promoting various implements, including tractors."[1] While agricultural mechanization involves many different types of equipment (see below), the tractor has become a symbol of the process for the industrialized as well as the developing countries. This attitude, combined with the influence of the agricultural machinery companies, has created a situation in which credits tend to be made readily available, especially for tractors. For example, from 1966 to 1973 the Philippines Rural Banking System received $33.5 million from the World Bank to finance tractor imports. In the early 1970s, the World Bank also made credits of $27.5 million available for importing 8,000 tractors into the Indian Punjab, and $30 million to support tractor imports to Pakistan. Socialist countries have not escaped the tractor (or other large-machine) fetish. During the early formative stage of the Soviet Union's agricultural development (the late 1920s) "Every question of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the supply of machines and implements to the countryside was. . .soon overshadowed by the tractor; 'the tractorization of agriculture' became the symbol of modern techniques and increased productivity."[2]

Overemphasis on agricultural mechanization and the belief that it is a necessary part of increasing agricultural production are probably due to two major factors. First, the United States has been widely viewed around the world as an example of successful agricultural development. It produces more than enough food to feed its people (even though many poor people cannot afford a proper diet). And since mechanization (tractors, implements, etc.) is such a conspicuous part of the American agricultural scene, it is assumed by many that mechanization is "progressive" and an integral part of yield increases. Second, the issues involved in understanding mechanization are complex and include looking at the topic from various vantage points.

Some of the problems involved in understanding mechanization arise from the following considerations:

(1) It frequently involves changing production methods at different stages (plowing and seedbed preparation, weed and insect control, irrigation, planting and fertilizer application, harvest and post-harvest handling).

(2) There are different types of equipment available. Some are low-cost and are appropriate for use in small-scale agriculture as well as on larger units. However, some machinery can be used only for large-scale agriculture.

(3) Mechanization of agricultural techniques may in some cases increase crop yields per unit area (lbs/acre or kg/hectare), but in other situations it may either have no effect or actually decrease crop yields.

(4) The social effects of mechanization may be very positive (when labor is scarce or must be freed from rural areas to provide an industrial labor force) *or* negative (when it displaces rural labor and there are insufficient alternative employment opportunities).

There are two completely different questions that must be kept in mind when discussing agricultural mechanization: What is the effect on output (a) per worker, and (b) per acre

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

acre (hectare)? Discussing these issues as well as others (energy use, rural organization, etc.) should help to illuminate some of the complexities of the issues involved.

Output Per Worker

There is little doubt that the main impetus historically driving the mechanization of agriculture, as had been the case with the mechanization of industry, was the desire to produce more with fewer workers. In fact, mechanization may be defined as the substitution of machine power for animal or human power. In the capitalist countries, this came about through the workings of the marketplace when labor was either unavailable or relatively high-priced. In some instances, the introduction of harvesting equipment in the United States (for cotton and tomatoes, for example) can be traced to the attempts of workers to obtain higher wages or to the loss of an assured low-cost labor supply when the import of Mexican workers (the "bracero program") was terminated. In the socialist countries, mechanization has been adopted as a conscious policy. Before the revolution in Cuba, the need for a very large labor force to harvest sugar cane caused the development of a work force that was idle for most of the year but available for the three to four month harvest period. After the 1959 revolution when full year-round employment was established as a priority, the mobilization of already employed workers to harvest the cane became a tremendous burden on the society. Mechanization of the harvest then developed into an important national goal.

Whatever the stimulus, the results are clear. Mechanization causes a dramatic increase in the output per worker, and less labor is needed in farming. For example, the average amount of farm labor needed to grow an acre of corn in the United States has decreased from about 25 hours in 1940-1944 to 5 hours in 1970. Perhaps the most dramatic decline has been for cotton harvesting where labor declined from 53 to 3 hours per acre between 1940-1944 and 1970.

Two of the consequences of such introduction of mechanization are (a) displacement of a portion of the rural work force and their migration to the cities, and (b) the development of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

larger farm units. When this happens without planning (in a capitalist society) and there is no increase in other jobs sufficient to absorb displaced rural workers, misery can be the only result. Many factors were involved in the massive, post-Second World War black migration from the rural south into the urban areas of the south, midwest, and the northeast. One of the most important was mechanization of agriculture (especially the cotton crop) which thus aided and abetted the creation of the black urban ghetto and the apparently hopeless situation of its inhabitants. Black and Hispanic workers were also displaced by the mechanical tomato harvester. It has been estimated that by 1973, nineteen million work hours were eliminated annually by this one machine.

In the Punjab area of Pakistan, 82 percent of tenants working land where owners purchased tractors were evicted, since their labor was no longer needed. More farmers were evicted when tractor owners rented additional land. In Sri Lanka, tractor introduction was responsible for a "significant redistribution of land, income, and wealth." Farmers purchasing tractors doubled their cultivated rice land.

Increased output per worker does not usually cause an increase in national food production. If crop yields (output per acre or hectare) are not increased, more land must be brought into agricultural production to boost food production. On the other hand, it is true that more land may be available for *human* food production since less animal feed is needed when machines replace animal power.

Output Per Hectare (Crop Yields)

There are some special situations where mechanization may increase output per hectare. For example, mechanical power may be the only way to break up a subsoil layer that restricts air, water, and root penetration. In addition, on certain soils modern implements may produce a better seedbed than traditional implements and thereby promote a higher percent of germinating seeds and healthier seedlings. Performing agricultural operations on time is of critical importance to high crop yields. Better "timeliness" has often been cited as one advantage of mechanization. However, if human

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and animal labor is plentiful, performance of agronomic practices may still be timely without mechanization. In fact, there are some situations in which timeliness is enhanced by low levels of mechanization. For example, plowing or harvesting a crop on a wet soil may be done by human and animal power when large machines would get bogged down and/or cause severe damage to soil structure.

On the other hand, there are numerous negative influences of mechanization on yields. Use of heavy machinery may cause soil compaction under the wheels and the development of a thin, dense subsoil layer at the depth of the plow (plow pan) which restricts water infiltration and root development. Use of very large tractors and implements makes it difficult for farmers to follow proper conservation techniques such as strip cropping or terracing. This causes more soil erosion, and the loss of topsoil results in a deterioration of soil fertility. Purchase of large specialized equipment for use on only one crop encourages monoculture rather than diversified crop production. This may increase disease and insect problems as well as soil erosion.

Mechanization of harvesting in the United States is estimated to leave 15 percent of the corn crop and 9 percent of the soybean crop in the field. These remains could have been harvested by hand. Removal of stones from some soils in Maine and New Brunswick (Canada) is necessary to allow for mechanization of the potato harvest. However, this results in lower potato yields due to increased compaction and soil erosion which cause lower soil temperature and water content.

In many cases, machinery may substitute for human or animal power without a positive or negative influence on yield. Studies in the Pakistan and Indian Punjab, as well as in the Philippines, indicate that there is no significant difference in yields due to use of tractors. Although some studies have indicated a yield increase with tractor use, when other factors (such as new varieties, fertilizers, and herbicides) are taken into account, there appears to be no yield increase due to tractors alone.

A study of 19 villages in the Indian Punjab indicated that compared to farms with tractors, those relying on human and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

animal power were smaller (11 vs. 25 acres), used more animal power per acre (357 percent more), and used more human labor per acre (50 percent more). However, wheat yields were virtually identical (2.29 vs. 2.26 metric tons per hectare for non-tractor and tractor farms respectively).

An interesting comparison also exists in the United States. A study in central Pennsylvania found that the Amish (who for religious and cultural reasons generally use stationary motors, but not tractors or combines) did as well as their more highly mechanized neighbors. "The yields per hectare," according to the authors, "for the two forms of agriculture are much the same, with Amish yields 4 percent higher."

There is also indirect evidence that mechanization by itself has little effect on crop yields. In a study comparing 43 countries, those with the higher agricultural production per hectare tended to have relatively low levels of machine use (or smaller tractors or other machines). The countries with high tractor horsepower (United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia) tended to have lower yields than countries with more labor-intensive practices. Yields per hectare tended to be positively correlated with fertilizer use.

(1) *Energy Use, Efficiency, and Mechanization*. Machines are produced only through the expenditure of various types of energy to mine and process raw materials, produce synthetic materials, make parts, and assemble finished products. The energy used is mainly in the form of fossil fuels (gas, oil, coal), although human labor is also expended. In addition, energy (petroleum or electricity generated from an energy source) is necessary for the machines to work. Thus, while the input of human and animal work (or energy) is decreased by agricultural mechanization, plenty of energy is used to manufacture and operate machines.

Using machines that require fuel for manufacturing and operation means that agriculture becomes closely tied to the availability and price of petroleum products. While other agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides are also very costly in energy terms, their proper use can routinely increase crop yields.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Another energy-related issue is the influence of mechanization on *efficiency* of converting energy into food. This is a very complex subject which cannot be dealt with in depth in this article. It is possible to convert any type of energy expended for work to a common unit. A commonly used way of expressing energy is the calorie, which is the amount of energy needed to raise the temperature of a gram of water by one degree centigrade. One thousand calories are referred to as one kilocalorie (kcal). When discussing the amount of calories in food for the human diet, the kilocalorie is commonly referred to as the Calorie (capital C). During normal activities humans use between 2,200 and 2,600 Calories per day, or about 100 Calories per hour. When strenuous work is being performed, the energy used may be three or four times the rate used while resting. In order to remain healthy a person's diet should include the number of Calories used during the day.

Animal energy expended during work can also be measured or estimated, and it is also possible to convert into calories all energy used to make and power machines. When there is a shift in technology, it is therefore possible to estimate the changes in energy used to work the land.

The subject of efficiency of conversion of energy into an agricultural product has generated much discussion, especially since the early 1980s. Unfortunately, much of the work has involved different methods of calculating energy inputs. We will cite one example here. An energy analysis of three different rice production methods was made.[3] These methods include: (a) "traditional" (hand and hoe cultivation and planting, gravity-fed irrigation, only manure for fertilization, hand sickle for harvesting, and hand threshing the grain); (b) "transitional" (bullock-pulled plow, hand seeding, better timed and controlled irrigation, vetch, manure, and a small amount of commercial chemicals for fertilizers, improved implements for harvest and weed control, hand threshing); and (c) "Green Revolution" (tractor and seeder, drilled wells and pumps, commercial fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides, tractor-driven harvester, and machine thresher). As the accompanying table shows, the energy used per hectare increases greatly between traditional, transitional, and Green Revolution technology.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Energy Use and Output in Rice Production

Method	*Input (kcal/hectare)*	*Output (kcal/hectare)*	*Output Input*	*Comparative Efficiency*
Traditional	327,910	4,537,500	13.8	100
Transitional	1,464,230	9,720,000	6.6	48
Green Rev.	5,494,754	15,972,000	2.9	21

While yields also increase (due to better rice varieties, more fertilizers, better pest control) when expressed in energy terms, there is a lower efficiency of converting energy to food for the more technologically advanced systems.

Similar results have also been observed for comparisons in the United States. For example, in the study of Amish agriculture referred to above, the modern farmers used 83 percent more energy to produce a unit of milk than did their Amish neighbors in Pennsylvania. A University of Connecticut study concludes that "for a surprising number of modern cropping systems, a 10-to-50-fold increase in the use of cultural energy [agricultural energy inputs in addition to sunlight] has only doubled or tripled the digestible energy yield compared with the more primitive systems using substantially less technology. This response exemplifies a decline of energy yield with energy investment and reveals that progressively larger expenditures of cultural energy are being used less efficiently in crop production."[4]

The energy conversion issue contains many complicated questions that deserve more study. For example, while output of any crop can easily be converted into energy terms (calories), many crops are grown for qualities other than their energy contents. For example, soybeans are grown for their oil and protein, vegetables such as tomatoes and carrots for their vitamin and mineral content, and cotton for its ability to be made into cloth. How do you compare calories with protein, minerals, cloth, etc.?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Another question deals with how the energy contribution of human labor is evaluated. In most studies only the actual food energy consumed in the work process (i.e., the calories that must be consumed so that the worker stays healthy) is assumed to be expended. In a society in which there is excess labor and this particular worker cannot work at some other task, this estimate may make some sense. Working or not, the person is alive and must consume food. Thus, the extra food consumed to perform the work represents the energy used in the work itself. However, when there are other possible employment opportunities, a more rigorous accounting of the "energy of labor" becomes important. This would be analogous to Marx's value of labor power and would include the energy needed to "reproduce" the laborer (the energy in the worker's clothing, housing, education, recreation, etc.).

(2) *Crop Quality.* Crop quality may be sacrificed when machinery is introduced. Efficient machine harvesting occurs when the whole field matures at the same time. In addition, the crop must withstand the harvesting process with minimum damage. However, varieties selected to mature evenly and to be tough enough to withstand mechanical harvesting without damage are not necessarily the most nutritious or tasty.

(3) *Planning for Mechanization.* In order to mechanize rapidly, machinery is often introduced into Third World countries on a large scale. It is frequently done without proper study to find out whether the right type of machine has been chosen for the particular situation. There are many examples of false hopes and waste generated by such practices. For example, one of Angola's leaders told of making "some deal with the Bulgarians or the Russians to grow cotton, and we bought their machines. But the machines turn out not to work here; they're not suitable for Angola. Again, I saw a giant machine for pineapple cultivation. It had never been used. You see that kind of thing everywhere. We need to do things our own way."[5]

As important as doing the preliminary evaluation to decide on the particular type of equipment needed is the task of making preparations to ensure the continued operation of the machines. Special provisions have to be made for training

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

farmers and/or technicians in the use, maintenance, and repair of the machines. In addition, a reliable supply of spare parts must be assured and must flow readily to the rural areas in order to minimize disruption of farming operations.

(4) *Regional Inequality*. When resources are limited, a country may decide that equipment purchased should be concentrated in certain regions. Frequently, regions which are already advanced are chosen to receive the new machines. For example, "China is planning to emphasize development of the already mechanized counties and state farms, and then count on them to progressively meet the needs of the urban population for grain and non-staple foodstuffs."[6] While it is easier to introduce new machines into already advanced regions, this strategy must further accentuate the differences between developed and underdeveloped agricultural regions within a country. The perpetuation and enhancing of regional differences can make the attainment of equality (socialism) more difficult.

(5) *Soil Fertility and Other Ecological Considerations*. Machinery makes it easier to use land that might otherwise have stayed fallow, or have been used at a low level of intensity. The current rapid opening up and clearing of vast areas of the Amazon River Basin (mainly in Brazil) is made possible with the use of land clearing and shaping equipment (bulldozers and graders) as well as mechanized techniques to actually farm the cleared areas. Thus, it is much easier to rapidly upset ecological systems. Some observers believe that in the case of the Amazon River Basin the lack of trees to use large amounts of carbon dioxide, coupled with the tremendous release of carbon dioxide from decomposing soil organic matter where soil is cultivated, will increase the carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere. This may cause a "greenhouse effect" with a resultant increase in the earth's average temperature, melting of some of the arctic ice mass, and flooding of low lying land.

Machinery also increases the tendency of "modern agriculture" toward monoculture. The purchase of an expensive machine specialized for only one crop will certainly induce the owner to continue growing that crop. Thus, monocultures become more attractive and even justifiable on narrow eco-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nomic grounds. However, monoculture tends to bring with it a set of problems such as a buildup of diseases, insects, and weeds that parasitize or compete with the single crop. Rotation of crops usually aids in control of these problems. In addition, using very large machinery makes it more difficult to follow proper erosion-control practices such as strip cropping or terrace maintenance. This, in addition to the loss of soil organic matter which accompanies continuous growing of row crops by conventional tillage systems, can create a situation of accelerated soil erosion.

To Mechanize or Not? While mechanization has little or no positive effect on crop yields, it does increase output per work hour. However, this is accomplished through lower energy conversion efficiency. The question of whether or not to mechanize and what type of equipment to use is one that must be answered only for specific agricultural (soil, crop, and climate) and socio-economic combinations. The elimination of back-breaking, repetitive, and boring labor should be a goal of a humane society. On the other hand, elimination of jobs when other jobs are not available is not particularly humane.

From many points of view, not the least of which is the necessity of uplifting the general technical capabilities of Third World workers, it makes sense to me to mechanize a step at a time. Learning how simple machines work and are repaired prepares workers for tackling more complex machines. When more complex machines are introduced, it also makes sense to introduce them gradually. This allows for evaluation of their usefulness under local conditions.

A study prepared for the International Labor Office led to the conclusion that "in effecting the transition from traditional to modern farming, the introduction of machinery is neither wholly good nor wholly bad; the balance of advantage will depend upon local agricultural circumstances which must be closely studied in order to elucidate what degree of mechanization will be the most advantageous economically and socially.[7]

NOTES

1. W. P. Falcon, "The Green Revolution: Generations of Problems," *American Journal of Agriculture Economics* 52(5): 698-710, 1970.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

2. E. H. Carr and R.W. Davies, *A History of Soviet Russia: Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, vol I (New York: Macmillan, 1969), p. 199.
3. S. M. Freedman, "Modification of Traditional Rice Production Practices in the Developing World: An Energy Efficiency Analysis," *Agro-Ecosystems*. 6:129-146. 1980.
4. G. H. Heichel, *Comparative Efficiency of Energy Use in Crop Production*, Connecticut Agricultural Experimental Station, New Haven, Bulletin 739. 1973.
5. *New York Times* (February 8, 1981).
6. *Beijing Review* (March 16, 1979).
7. J. Monly and E. Costa, *Employment Policies in Developing Countries: A Comparative Analysis*, Published for the International Labor Office, Geneva, by George Allen and Unwin Ltd. London, 1974.

Come with us!

1982 URPE SUMMER CONFERENCE

August 25-29
Becket, Massachusetts

URPE and the Left:
Developing Strategies for the 1980's

Daily workshops on the analysis of and responses to the contemporary economic crisis and community and workplace organizing. Special political economy programs for "non-political economists" and children.

Plenaries:
Theories of Capitalist Crisis and Their Political Implications: Two Views (Anwar Shaikh and Sam Bowles)
The Feminist Challenge to Marxist Thought and Left Politics
International Perspectives: The Role of Intellectuals in Social-Political Movements

Sports, good food, child care, films, concerts and dancing!

For a free brochure write: URPE, 41 Union Square West, Room 901, NY, NY 10003.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MONTHLY REVIEW

Special sub rates to students and senior citizens:
☐ **$13 (foreign $15); £7.50**

☐ **1 year $18 (foreign $22); £11**
☐ **2 years $32 (foreign $40); £20**
Libraries and institutions:
☐ **1 year $30 (foreign $33); £16.50**

MONTHLY REVIEW
62 West 14th Street
New York, NY 10011

MONTHLY REVIEW
47 The Cut
London SE1 8LL, England

Please send me MONTHLY REVIEW for ☐1 year ☐2 years

I enclose $_____ **I enclose £_____**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

(Canadian subscribers must pay the foreign rate.)

REVOLUTION magazine, Special Issue No. 50

CONQUER THE WORLD?
The International Proletariat Must and Will

An important talk by Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA. It introduces groundbreaking analysis of imperialism as capitalism which has become decisively internationalized—but which cannot get away from its national bases; of proletarian revolution as therefore a world process which must yet take place in national contexts; and of world wars as nodal points in the development of both imperialism and revolution. In this light, Avakian re-evaluates the history of the international communist movement, drawing out lessons from both the tremendous advances and the serious errors and setbacks—lessons for the historic conjuncture which he sees shaping up now within the world imperialist system.

If the proletariat has a country does it have nothing to lose but its chains? *. . . To think there's no contradiction between a proletariat having state power and the advance of world revolution means you can only incorrectly handle what is a very profound and at times extremely acute and potentially antagonistic contradiction . . . the problem is how to carry forward the socialist transformation in those countries where breakthroughs occur, not just as a base area in the abstract but as a subordinate part of the world revolution.*

Leninism is the bridge *. . . the key link in giving Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought its overall integral character as the science of revolution. To put it somewhat provocatively, Marxism without Leninism is Eurocentric social-chauvinism and social democracy. Maoism without Leninism is nationalism (and also, in certain contexts, social-chauvinism) and bourgeois democracy.*

Single issues, $2.50; 6 issue subscription, $10. Specify English or Spanish.
Order from RCP Publications, PO Box 3486-M, Chicago, IL 60654

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF THE WORLD CAPITALIST ECONOMY

BY SAMIR AMIN

The Modern World System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750, by Immanuel Wallerstein. New York: Academic Press, 1980; $22.

In his first volume, Wallerstein put forth the thesis that the dawn of capitalism (the "transition" from feudalism to capitalism, which he situates between 1450 and 1640) not only coincided with the establishment of a capitalist "world economy" but that these two events were inextricably intertwined. This thesis sharply contrasted with the widely held view according to which capitalist relations of production, having emerged out of the local disintegration of feudal relations in northwestern Europe, underwent a progressive expansion, first on the basis of the regional, then the national and, finally, the world market.*

In this second volume, which covers the period 1600-1750, Wallerstein examines the expansion of the mercantile-capitalist world economy. The thesis he advances here is primarily a challenge to the one associated with Perry Anderson. Whereas Anderson qualifies as "feudal" the period which preceded the "industrial revolution," Wallerstein suggests that a schema which counterposes the aristocracy (the so-called feudal class) to the "bourgeoisie" (the new class) is artificial since, within the framework of the absolutist

Samir Amin is the author of, among other Monthly Review Press titles, *Class and Nation, Historically and in the Current Crisis* and *Accumulation on a World Scale.*

*See my review of volume one in MONTHLY REVIEW (December 1975).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

state, the aristocracy transformed itself from a feudal into an agrarian-capitalist class and fused with the bourgeoisie. That the exploitation of the peasantry was accentuated by the absolutist state is not, as Anderson asserts, indicative of the feudal character of the period; on the contrary, intensified exploitation was an aspect of primitive capitalist accumulation. It follows that, like the ideology of this epoch (Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, etc.), the new states which crystallized around 1650—England, the United Provinces, France—were, in fact, capitalist. While it is true, according to Wallerstein, that the series of revolutions which punctuated Western European history between 1620 and 1789 marked the transformation of the new (absolutist) state into a liberal one, the dogma (occasionally shared even by Marxists) which equates the absolutist state with feudalism and the liberal state with capitalism is an invention of bourgeois ideology. The absolutist state was no less necessary for the original accumulation of capital than the liberal state was for the continuation of the accumulation process.

By thus locating the birth of capitalism in the mid-seventeenth century and the transition to this system in the preceding period (1450-1650), Wallerstein reduces the significance of the bourgeois revolutions (in England, 1640 and 1685; in France, 1789) and the "industrial revolution." In a text published elsewhere, for example, he denies the real depth of the so-called technical revolution. Instead, he emphasizes the continuity in the development of the productive forces and the absence of any real English superiority over France in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors. The "industrial revolution," in this perspective, is nothing more than an ideological invention used to justify English hegemony in the nineteenth century. (These are themes which Wallerstein will no doubt take up in volume three.)

In fact, England's decisive advantage in the nineteenth century derived not from its technical superiority but, rather, from the hegemonic position it managed to secure in the course of the mercantile period.

During the two preceding centuries—1450-1650—the then nascent world economy experienced a Phase A of rapid expansion. Iberia (which shaped the course of the Americas) and the old regions of Italy and southern Germany were throughout these two hundred years the system's centers of gravity. In the course of the difficult Phase B which followed—1600-1750—the system was rounded out

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the centers of gravity shifted to northwestern Europe. England, the United Provinces, and France were now the dominant powers. The struggle between these three states for control of the world capitalist economy constitutes the essence of this period.

Holland was the first to exercise hegemony. By virtue of the fleet it had assembled—three times England's tonnage and greater than the combined tonnage of England, France, Portugal, and Germany—the Dutch, during the seventeenth century, controlled the oceans.* The wealth derived from this maritime pre-eminence (the Dutch lived in the only permanently solvent state of the epoch) enabled them to fashion Holland into the first liberal state. This state was, if anything, rather formidable. Here again the dogma according to which a liberal state is necessarily weak has its origin in Whig ideology.

Around 1650, France and England began vying with each other to succeed Holland as the hegemonic power. In 1763, after more than a century of struggles, England emerged triumphant. To what was this victory due? Wallerstein rejects the explanation which credits England's success to its "bourgeois" political system (in this view, France was hobbled by a "feudal" political structure) or its technical superiority. Why, then, did England look to the seas while France spent itself on the continental terrain? Because the agricultural market was still too small to permit the development of industry either in England, with its modest physical dimensions, or in France, still split into five large subdivisions. England, the smaller of the two countries, had no alternative but to pursue outward expansion. France, by way of contrast, sought to complete its territorial integration (a process that had to await the Revolution before it reached fruition).

England's maritime and colonial expansion at first profited from the protection of the Dutch, who immobilized the Spanish and Portuguese and wrested from them control of the Atlantic, thus allowing the creation of those Engish-populated settlements in North America which proved so important in the realization of England's hegemonic ambitions.

How did the system's peripheries fit into this picture? Wallerstein's central idea is that while the fruits of prosperity (growing out

*Which explains why an ideology of *mare liberum* should prevail in Holland and *mare clausum* in Iberia.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the mercantile system) facilitated an aristocratic-bourgeois-peasant alliance in the powerful centers, a diminution of revenues in the periphery generated intensified struggles there. Superexploitation of the especially vulnerable peasantry and enfeeblement—occasionally even collapse—of the state resulted. (The peripheral state, despite its violent and despotic aspects, was rather weak.) The central facts of this period fit nicely into this scenario—a scenario, moreover, which irresistibly invites comparison with events unfolding in the present-day imperialist epoch.

In seventeenth-century Latin America, the patriarchal economy was beating a retreat before the *hacienda* system. At the same time, the metropoles, Spain and Portugal, were vainly attempting to increase the tribute extracted from their colonies. The retreat, while contrary to the developmental needs of a large-scale, Atlantic-based capitalism, did stimulate the creation of a small, local, import-substitution capitalism. The hand of the local creole bourgeoisie was thereby strengthened and the way was paved for the independence struggles of the next century.

Events in eastern and southern Europe lend further support to Wallerstein's thesis. There, the state fell into crisis—in Poland, Hungary, and Sweden it collapsed; in Iberia and Italy it was in decline, and in Austria it was very weak—and a "second serfdom" took root. Attempts at renewal initiated by "enlightened despotisms," in fact producing meager results, do not invalidate Wallerstein's thesis. To be sure, in a kind of preview of things to come, Russia and Prussia did emerge from the wings of the historical stage. But this turn of events serves only to underscore the fact that if the first term of the dialectic "internal causes" (the distinctive reactions of different social and political formations)/"external causes" (center-periphery relations) is ignored, certain historical occurrences remain incomprehensible. Wallerstein qualifies those societies which reacted positively to the external challenge as parts of the "semi-periphery."

Asia and the Ottoman Empire were still external regions at this stage in the development of the world capitalist system. Commercial relations with these regions were qualitatively different from those which bound the American peripheries to the system. The American social formations lacked autonomy; the exigencies of an expanding world economy determined their destinies. Additionally, at this stage, Oriental and Asian commerce was still not in a position to "peripherize" the regions in question. However, the Ottoman

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Empire, following the capitulations, and India, after its subjugation at the end of this period, were forced to take the first steps along this path as, of course, was Indonesia, the oldest important Asian colony, which was refashioned to suit the needs of the Dutch metropole.

In the Americas, too, the new metropoles abandoned their efforts to dominate the relatively intractable "large peripheries" during this Phase B of readjustment. Instead, they concentrated their energies on intensifying the exploitation (and superexploitation) of the more manageable "small peripheries." It was at this time that the Antilles were turned into sugar-producing slave economies.

Wallerstein's thesis, as we can see, is extremely stimulating. He directly challenges the hitherto dominant conception of the world capitalist system's origins. The theses that we have defended largely overlap those of Wallerstein.* In conclusion, then, we wish to make three observations.

In the first place, the origins of the capitalist system are not illuminated by highly abstract uses of the couple "external causes"/ "internal causes." Our thesis is that both the disintegration of the feudal mode of production and the emergence of a capitalist world economy were constitutive to capitalism; in fact, the two processes were indissolubly linked. We have advanced the thesis that (1) the feudal system, a particular form of the tributary mode, arose out of the historical telescoping of the communal modes prevalent in barbarian Europe and the slave formations of Roman antiquity; and (2) the specificities of this system explain its premature disintegration. That is to say, in comparison with the more advanced incarnations of the tributary mode, surplus centralization in the politically fragile feudal system was difficult to achieve. What the European variety of the tributary mode thus lost in centralizing capacity, however, it gained in greater flexibility. When, with the advent of the absolutist state, European political forms came to resemble their more vigorous counterparts elsewhere, it was too late: capitalism and the bourgeoisie could not be uprooted, and the content of the state was henceforth "capitalist," not "feudal" (or tributary). But this state, as Wallerstein shows, was a by-product of the world economy. Had such an economy not arisen, it is impossible to say what would have replaced the disintegrating feudal mode. On the other hand, if

*See Samir Amin, *Class and Nation, Historically and in the Current Crisis* (Monthly Review Press, 1981).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the specificity of this mode is ignored and the origin of capitalism is reduced to the effects of large-scale commerce (the treasures of the Americas, etc.), a superficial circulationist argument results, one in which capitalist and market relations are confused. Because the Chinese tributary formation was able to neutralize the dissolving effects of long-distance trade, for example, China's commercial relations could not (and did not) have the same consequences as such relations had in Europe. The link holding Atlantic Europe and the Americas together was not a simple market relation but, rather, a relation that went to the heart of an organized system, *viz.*, the unequal international division of labor. It follows that the "market" relation was not external but very much internal to the system. In this sense, Atlantic commerce and the exploitation of the periphery were not at all "contingent" but, quite the contrary, "constitutive" to the capitalist system.

Secondly, implicit in Wallerstein's historical perspective is a fundamental critique of the deformations produced by bourgeois ideology. The liberal Whig version of this ideology, for instance, magnifies the (in fact marginal) differences that marked off England from France at this time in the political (i.e., the make-up of the state and social classes) and the economic (i.e., the level of development of the productive forces) domains.

English history thus enjoys a special, privileged status in Whig accounts of the "agricultural" and "industrial" revolutions and the 1685 Glorious ("bourgeois") Revolution. Contrariwise, English maritime and colonial hegemony after 1763—its central advantage—is ignored. In its radical, indeed Marxist, guise, this ideology has made of the 1640 English Revolution (Cromwell and the Roundheads) and the French Revolution of 1789-93 (the Jacobins) the points of departure in the development of capitalism whereas, in reality, they were—however crucial—only moments in this process.

Finally, in order to explain the way in which different social formations responded to the challenge posed by integration into the world capitalist economy, Wallerstein introduces the concept of "semi-periphery." Now, we have no difficulty in accepting the hypothesis that, in relation to western Europe which dominated the Atlantic-based world economic system, central, eastern, and southern Europe constituted "semi-peripheries" and that the real, center-fashioned, periphery was located elsewhere, namely in the Americas

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and coastal Africa along the route of the slave-trade (the Orient stood outside this system). However, in our view, "semi-periphery" is not the best choice of terms. In fact, these were retarded formations which, in the course of the nineteenth century, gradually emerged as fully-developed centers. The end-products of this belated evolution, to be sure, were not uniform. In several cases—Prussia, Germany, Russia, and, somewhat later, Sweden—they won strong positions in the system. In other instances—Poland, which ceased to exist as a state, and Mediterranean Europe, which was experiencing its renaissance at practically the same moment—these social formations were not quite so fortunate. But to speak of a fully developed center in no way implies absolute "equality" in the international division of labor and in the development of productive forces. Rather, it signals the fact that, in the nineteenth century, for example, these formations were not "peripherized." Asia, the Ottoman Empire, and the interior of Africa—regions which, up until then, were external to the system—shared a wholly different fate. That inequalities persisted outside the center is, of course, obvious. That Brazil is not Rwanda is self-evident. Does it necessarily follow, however, that the category of "semi-periphery" is still relevant once our attention is fixed on this new system, the embryo of present-day imperialism? This question, prompted by the book under review, remains open.

BACK ISSUES OF MR NEEDED FOR LIBRARIES!

In order to promptly fill orders from libraries and scholars for specific back issues we need help from our readers. If you no longer need any of the following issues we would be grateful to have you donate them to us:

all issues from 1949 to 1964	
Jan. 1967, '71, '72	**June 1976**
Feb. 1971	**July/August 1965, '67, '72, '74, '75**
April 1976	**Sept. 1966**
May 1965	**Nov. 1966**

Please bring or mail (4th class) your contribution to the **MR** office at **62 West 14th Street, NY, NY 10011.**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SAMIR AMIN ■ GIOVANNI ARRIGHI

ANDRE GUNDER FRANK ■ IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN

Almost everyone today speaks of a crisis. But what kind of crisis are we in? Four authors well known for their writings on the world economy have collaborated to bring you their collective and individual views on this subject. They discuss both the current situation and probable future developments, as well as the decline of U.S. hegemony, the acute competition between core capitalist states, the rising protest among workers in noncapitalist nations, and national and socialist movements in the periphery.

All of this is included in the authors' individual essays, and in a collectively written conclusion.

CL6054 $18.00 Please add $1.00 for the first book, 25¢ for each additional book, when ordering by mail.

MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS 62 West 14th St., New York, NY 10011

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

DOCTORS AND SOCIALIZED HEALTH CARE IN QUEBEC

By John Osterman

The article appearing recently in MONTHLY REVIEW (September 1981) by Errol Black entitled "Dealing with the Doctors: The Canadian Experience" is both simplistic and misleading. As with most commentators from English-speaking Canada, Black fails entirely to consider the singular exception of the medical insurance system in the province of Québec, which, while retaining a fee-for-service method of payment for physicians, has virtually none of the faults of the plans in the other nine provinces to which his article refers.[1]

In Québec, extra-billing is illegal and can result in fines, imprisonment, and removal of license to practice.

Though opting out theoretically exists, in fact it is not an issue. As patients who visit opted-out physicians are not reimbursed in any form by the government, and since they must nevertheless pay for government-provided medical services through their contributions to general tax revenues, they simply decline to visit such doctors. Consequently fewer than one percent (perhaps 75) of Québec physicians have opted-out, consisting mostly of elderly doctors winding down their practice, or of those seeing patients on a limited part-time basis and receiving the bulk of their income from other sources.

Negotiations of fee scales are conducted between the government and representatives from the two physicians' unions (one for

John Osterman is a Québec physician currently studying occupational medicine and public health at the Harvard School of Public Health.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

specialists and one for general practitioners). Though contracts are sometimes settled through binding third-party arbitration, the usual case has been that the government dictates terms which physicians are more or less obliged to accept. Threats of strike are not taken seriously; the two strikes which have occurred in the past have been short-lived and poorly supported. Québec doctors, it seems, are either unwilling or unable to strike. Similarly, there is no evidence that Québec physicians are going elsewhere to practice; on the contrary, physicians, particularly those who have graduated since the system was instituted in 1970, are showing greater and greater acceptance of socialized medical care.

Because there is no recourse to extra-billing or opting-out, physicians cannot charge fees beyond government set rates. Black's "Trojan Horse" is simply non-existent.

Several other features distinguish Québec's health-care system from those of the other provinces. Deterrent and user fees have never been implemented.[2] Though a small user fee for medical visits was recently proposed by the provincial Minister of Finance, the resulting uproar emanating from the provincial Minister of Health, physicians, and the public at large was so great that the idea was permanently scrapped.

Unlike the other provinces, and indeed most countries,[3] a large part of the cost of medical insurance is born by employers through a 3 percent payroll surcharge; employers must pay the equivalent of 3 percent of the gross earnings of their employees, over and above their employees' wages, to the medical insurance board.[4] The remainder of the cost of the system is paid through general tax revenues.

Drugs are paid for by the plan for all persons on welfare, or over the age of 65. Very expensive drugs, such as chemotherapeutic agents are always covered regardless of social or financial status. Eventually, all drug costs are supposed to be included for everyone.

All dental surgery is covered. In addition, all other dental work is included for persons on welfare, over 65 and under 17 years of age. As this last age limit is increased one year, every year, dentists will eventually be entirely within the system.

"Private" medical clinics (in quotation marks since users pay no fees, personnel being paid either directly by the government or indirectly through fees paid to physicians, and all investigative procedures and most forms of treatment are paid for by the government)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are beginning to receive competition from Local Community Service Centers (C.L.S.C.s). Set up as one of the many results of Québec's separate Commission of Inquiry on Health and Social Welfare (known as the Castonguay-Nepveu Commission),[5] C.L.S.C.s are government-run community clinics combining both health and social services, and staffed by salaried physicians, nurses, and other health care workers as well as social workers and community activists. They have a strong preventive-medicine orientation, offering, for example, programs in pre-natal and well-baby care, nutrition, sex counselling and abortion referral, investigation of occupational and toxicological problems, and programs for the elderly. Each C.L.S.C. is controlled by a governing body consisting of five individuals elected from the community of users of the clinic, as well as seven representatives from the occupational groups within the clinic, including health care, social, maintenance, and clerical workers, and occasionally, government appointees.[6]

No privately run hospitals exist in Québec. The governing boards of hospitals are similar in composition to those of C.L.S.C.s.

Given the enormous differences in the health care system of Québec as compared to the rest of Canada, I feel that one can say, beyond doubt, that this province is significantly closer to realizing the goals of the Hall Commission—i.e., establishing a system in which "all personal health services [are] universally available on uniform terms and conditions for all residents."[7] Moreover, I feel that Québec has come very close to establishing as "socialized" a system of medical care as is possible within the confines of an economy which remains capitalist in nature. That the underlying payment scheme for doctors continues to be fee-for-service is testimony to the fact that Black's conclusions are very misleading indeed!

True, problems continue to exist—let us not make the utopian error that to be truly socialized a system must be, by definition, perfect—but these are of an entirely different order than those of the other provinces. Rather than being concerned with the destruction of the existing system through extra-billing, opting-out, and private enterprise, Québec's concerns involve the improvement of the system through enlarging the C.L.S.C. network, decreasing the geographic maldistribution of services, and improving services for certain disadvantaged groups, particularly the elderly.

A second, more theoretical argument can be made against

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Black's conclusion that fee-for-service must be entirely done away with before the socialization of medicine can progress. Certainly one might, as Black does, regard fee-for-service as a petty bourgeois holdover from the pre-national health insurance era. However, an equally convincing argument could be made that fee-for-service is merely another manifestation of that very working-class phenomenon, the piece rate—with two differences: the rates are higher and the "pieces" are the various services provided. Similarly, one could also convincingly argue that should physicians become salaried, they would simply become much more like those very petty bourgeois cadres, university professors and salaried managers. To argue that a system providing for salaried physicians is more "socialized" than a system using fee-for-service payments makes about as much sense as to argue that wage laborers are more "working class" than piece-rate laborers (but less than salaried laborers?). Moreover, to suggest, as Black does, that the method of payment somehow affects physicians' subjectively perceived class interests or objectively manifested class role is to miss the point of Marxist social analysis entirely. Physicians are petty bourgeois by virtue of their social origins, their position of authority and control within the health care establishment, and the quantity of money they earn[8]—the method of payment is irrelevant.[9]

Rather, the successful institution of socialized medical care depends on a number of far more important issues. Some of these are well illustrated by again contrasting Québec to the rest of Canada.[10] First and foremost is the degree of working-class organization and militancy. For a variety of social and economic reasons, Québec has the most organized labor force in North America; 60 percent of all workers are members of unions. Worker militancy is rampant; Québec perennially leads the other provinces in working-days lost to strikes, strikes which have in some instances permanently closed enterprises or have resulted in worker financial takeover. Of the three major union centrals, the politics of two (the FTQ and the CEQ) may be described as left-wing social democrat, while the third (the CSN, second largest of the three) is openly Marxist. All of Québec's unions have been intimately involved in the development of social legislation in the province during the last 15 years. This activity was certainly one of the main reasons why Québec rejected the recommendations of the Hall Commission and established its own

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commission of Inquiry (the Castonguay-Nepveu Commission) from which many of the previously described differences and innovations originate.

A second factor was the election of a government representing working-class interests. Though the social democratic Parti Québécois, elected in 1976, is by no means socialist and is committed to upholding the basic tenets of the capitalist system, it nevertheless has a strong commitment to social reform. Unlike the other social democratic party in Canada, the New Democratic Party (NDP), the Parti Québécois receives the bulk of its support from the working class, and consequently does not share the NDP's dubious history of regularly throwing its left wing out of the party. Left-wingers have been very active within the party at all levels and have controlled several cabinet posts, including, until very recently, that of Health and Social Affairs. Granted, one might interpret the actions of the Parti Québécois in the health sector as merely serving a legitimizing function in the face of growing worker militancy (which, in fact, it does); it is, nevertheless, easier to live with a government willing to make such concessions.

Finally, a third factor is the strong sense of solidarity and social consciousness that exists within French Canada, among workers and non-workers alike, resulting from years of social and economic oppression by the British monarchy, English industrialists, and American capitalists. This feeling is expressed in the support and implementation of reform minded legislation.[11]

Despite the above, I am one of a number of Québec physicians who receive the bulk of their income in the form of salary.[12] Salary offers certain clear-cut advantages over fee-for-service, some of which were alluded to by Black. For the physician these include income security, removal of financial constraints on the choice of diagnostic and treatment procedures, and the possibility of spending more time with individual patients than is often possible under current conditions. For society, these include the removal of monetary considerations from diagnostic and treatment choices, a reduction of overservicing, a reduction of administrative costs, and a general improvement in the rationalization of health care delivery. However, remuneration based on salary also has important drawbacks through the fostering of inefficiency, underservicing, increased referrals of problem cases, and the removal of any possibility of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

creating economic incentives for the achievement of socially desired goals. Moreover, there is no evidence that salaried remuneration in any way shifts emphasis from treatment and cure to prevention.

My own view is that the ideal system of physician payment would be a mixture of salary, fee-for-service, and the British system of capitation.[13] While salary, with its simplicity and overall rationale would provide the basis for such a scheme, capitation would explicitly establish a relationship between every citizen and his physician, or group of physicians. A system of incentives based on fee-for-service, could then be employed to selectively encourage socially desired goals (for example, prevention) and discourage undesirable ones. Through the creative implementation of this or a similar scheme, socialized medicine could be significantly improved in both Québec and Canada. Of course, this is not to deny that a necessary precondition for the implementation of the *perfect* socialized medical system is a socialized economy in general.

NOTES:

1. For an excellent review of the history of socialized medicine in Québec, see Taylor, Malcolm G., "Québec Medicare: Policy Formation in Conflict and Crisis," *Canadian Public Administration* (Summer, 1972).
2. A small user fee is charged to residents of government-run chronic-care institutions who cannot prove medical necessity or financial need.
3. Both France and the Federal Republic of Germany are exceptions to this rule and, like Québec, finance their respective health insurance plans partly through the use of payroll surcharge. In Germany, this amounts to 5.5 percent of gross wages; an equal amount is deducted from workers' paychecks. In France, employers pay 12.5 percent of gross wages to the national health insurance plan; workers con tribute an additional 3.5 percent as well as pay a 25 percent user fee for most services. Source: Chester, T.E., "Health Care in West Germany and France," *Three Banks Review* (Edinburgh: December 1976), pp. 66-84.
4. This rate was increased from 1.5 percent in April 1981. In Fiscal Year 1980, 53.3 percent of medical costs (excluding hospitals) were paid for by this surcharge, 41.2 percent came from the federal government's cost-sharing program, and 5.5 percent from general revenues. Source: *Régie de l'assurance-maladie du Québec, Douzième rapport annuel,* 1980-1981 (Gouvernement du Québec). Seven-fifteenths of the revenue collected by the surcharge is used to finance hospitals, the cost of which is also shared by the federal government. Source: Soderstrom, Lee, *The Canadian Health Care System* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 138.
5. *Commission of Inquiry on Health and Social Welfare* (The Castonguay-Nepveu Commission), *Rapport*, 7 volumes and 25 appendixes, published between 1967 and 1973 (Gouvernement du Québec). This voluminous work laid the blue prints for Québec's socialized medical system.
6. The C.L.S.C. system has recently run into financial and bureaucratic problems which are slowing its widespread implementation. Hopefully these problems will be resolved in the near future. *The Montreal Gazette,* October 24, 1981.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

7. *Royal Commission on Health Services* (Hall Commission), 2 volumes (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1964), p. 5.
8. For a superb analysis of social class and its relation to the health sector, see Navarro, Vincente, "An Explanation of the Composition, Nature, and Functions of the Present Health Sector of the United States," in *Medicine Under Capitalism* (New York: Prodist, 1976), pp. 135-169.
9. Even in that citadel of capitalism, the United States, many physicians are already paid by salary with no apparent changes in their class behavior. These would include emergency room physicians, those working in Health Maintenance Organization (H.M.O.) settings, researchers, etc.
10. For an insight as to why Québec is different, see Milner, Henry, "The Decline and Fall of the Québec Liberal Regime: Contradictions in the Modern Québec State," in Panitch, Leo, (ed.), *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), pp. 101-132.
11. It is no accident that Québec has one of the highest minimum wages in Canada, the best workman's compensation plan in North America (90 percent of former wages), an "anti-scab" law which prohibits the hiring of scabs during legal strikes, and an OSHA-like commission which has the authority to close down a factory entirely should a potentially life-threatening hazard be discovered—with full pay to the workers during the entire period of shut-down. Similarly, it was not by accident that a legal challenge to a federal law limiting abortion on demand was won before a Québec jury.
12. Salaried physicians include all interns and residents, those working in C.L.S.C.s and other public health institutions, researchers, administrators, and some practitioners.
13. For discussion, see Lee, Sidney S., and Butler, L.M., "The Three-Layered Cake: A Plan for Physician Compensation," *New England Journal of Medicine,* Vol. 291 (1974), pp. 253-256.

REPLY TO OSTERMAN

By Errol Black

Osterman's paper, "Doctors and Socialized Health Care in Québec," contains some interesting and detailed information on the health-care situation in Québec. Had he confined himself to presenting this information, the paper would have served as a useful extension to my piece on the medical profession in Canada. Unfortunately, Osterman attempts to do more than this and, in the process, both misrepresents my views and makes assertions which are, to use his terms, "simplistic and misleading."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To begin with, Osterman implies that I believe the fee-for-service payment system is, in and of itself, the major barrier to progress towards socialized health care in Canada. Surely it was clear in my article that I was talking about the fee-for-service payment system as but one of the factors, albeit an important one, contributing to the perpetuation of doctors in a privileged position in the health-care sector and in society. This is explicitly spelled out in my concluding paragraph where it is stated that "so long as the doctors retain the fee-for-service system and other remnants of the arrangements which have set them apart from workers in the health-care system and other workers in general," it seems unlikely that Canada will progress very much farther toward the goals set by the Hall Commission in 1964, let alone toward socialized health care. These "other remnants" include, among other things, ownership of much of the plant and equipment used in the provision of medical care service and control of medical schools by doctors.

The coexistence of the fee-for-service system with these other aspects of the organization of medical care in Canada, and apparently also in Québec, makes it nonsense to argue, as Osterman does, that "fee-for-service is merely another manifestation of that very working-class phenomenon, the piece rate—with two differences: the rates are higher and the 'pieces' are the various services provided." There are other differences, important qualitative differences, between the fee-for-service rate of doctors and the piece-rate of, say, garment workers. These differences were hinted at by the public relations officer of the Manitoba Medical Association in 1978, when the issue of how doctors should be paid was being debated in Manitoba. Specifically, the MMA's public relations man, Doug Deegan, "pointed to the curtailment of the doctor's freedom under a salary system, describing doctors now as 'independent entrepreneurs' in a 'competitive business' that is 'part of the service industry.'"[1]

Moreover, even if medical facilities were collectively owned and community operated, important qualitative differences between the fee-for-service payment to doctors and the piece-rate would remain. Obviously, in contrast to the majority of piece-rate workers in North America, doctors would still be in a position to manipulate services provided so as to maximize their fee income. And because of this, they would continue to resist any attempt to have other workers, such as paraprofessionals, perform any of the more routine and less

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

demanding tasks which are now either done directly by doctors or done through "jobbing-out" arrangements which they define and control.

In short the method of payment of doctors, while not the whole story, is, as most doctors recognize and contrary to what Osterman argues, very relevant; it is an important determinant of both doctors' "subjectively perceived class role" and their "objectively manifested class role."

Secondly, Osterman argues that the health-care system in Québec is very different from what it is in other provinces. However, when we examine the features of that health-care system which he cites in support of his argument, the only ones which appear unique are the opting-out arrangements for doctors, the restrictions on extra-billing, and the partial funding of medical care through a payroll tax (which I suspect ends up being shifted, partially at least, backward onto workers). The other features he cites are in fact present in some other provinces. Thus Manitoba, the province with which I am most familiar, has a rudimentary dental-care program, a partial pharmacare program, and some community clinics.

But just because Manitoba has such programs and is expanding them doesn't justify the conclusion that Manitoba is close to having a socialized health-care system. Nor is such a conclusion justified in the Québec situation. Under a system of socialized health care, as I understand it, the individuals and groups involved in the provision of services would do things because they were in the interests of the recipients of the services. Osterman's preoccupation with the incentives question and the need to retain fee-for-service arrangements in some form, suggests that Québec is still a long way from this state of affairs.

Thirdly, Osterman notes that doctors in Québec seem content to work within the constraints imposed by the health-care system. This may be because of the reasons Osterman cites. On the other hand, it may be because Québec doctors have done very well under these arrangements. Thus in 1971, the year Medicare was established in most provinces, the average gross earnings of Québec doctors increased by 39 percent. By comparison, the increase in the average gross earnings of all doctors in Canada was 12 percent.[2] According to the 1977 taxation data—which summarize the latest earning figures that I have access to—Québec doctors are now at the top of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

national league tables and, relative to people classified as "employees" (about 75 percent of individuals filing returns), they are better off than their counterparts in all provinces west of Québec.[3]

Finally, I am in complete agreement with Osterman's last point, namely, that progress in health-care arrangements depends on other "far more important issues,"[4] although here too things are not always what they seem to be or what we would expect them to be. For example, in the recent election in Manitoba (November 17th) the incumbent government, which had been elected on a neoconservative platform in 1977 and immediately made large and damaging cuts in the health-care system, sought to retain office by, amongst other things, promising to bring in a comprehensive dental-care program by 1984.[5] Perhaps the Conservative Party in Manitoba was emulating the Parti Québécois which, it seems, also shows some enthusiasm for social democratic reforms when it is expedient.

NOTES:

1. Don Lindenberg, "Sherman Rejects Health Proposals," *The Brandon Sun* (August 23, 1978).
2. Health and Welfare Canada, "Earnings of Physicians in Canada, 1962-1972" (Ottawa, 1975).
3. *Revenue Canada*, "Taxation Statistics, 1977" (Ottawa, 1979).
4. I would, however, question Osterman's assertion that "Québec has the most organized labor force in North America: 60 percent of all workers are members of unions." In particular, I wonder about the figure of 60 percent. In a recent article on the events leading up to the May 1980 referendum, Stanley Ryerson uses a figure of 28 percent. ("The Québec/Canada Conundrum," *Marxist Perspectives* vol. 3, no. 2 [1980], p. 146.) The figure I usually work with in doing these sorts of comparisons is the proportion of non-agricultural paid workers in unions. For 1977, this proportion for Québec was 40.3 percent. The proportion was higher in Newfoundland—48.9 percent, New Brunswick—42.4 percent, and British Columbia—49.2 percent. Source: W.D. Wood and Pradeep Kumar, eds., *The Current Industrial Relations Scene in Canada* (Kingston, Ontario, 1979), p. 305. If these figures are correct, then the Québec labor force is not the most organized in North America. It is, however, the most militant.
5. Fortunately, the New Democratic Party was elected to office by a coalition of large segments of the working class, including many trade unionists, native peoples, and marginal farmers – all of them with long memories.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(continued from inside front cover)

them to stock the book and display it as prominently as possible. By acting in this way you would in effect be constituting yourselves as a sales force many times larger and more effective than MR Press, or for that matter most other publishers, can possibly afford. And the subject of *Protest and Survive* is getting so much publicity in the media these days that hardly anyone can fail to recognize the book's great sales potential.

In 1957, 25 years ago this year, MR Press published Paul Baran's *Political Economy of Growth* which ranks high among the most important Marxist works of the second half of the twentieth century. To mark this anniversary the New York Marxist School, with the enthusiastic encouragement of us at MR and MR Press, is considering organizing a conference to reassess Baran's work and review its influence, especially in the Third World. It is hoped that the conference can be held in New York late this year or early in 1983. Suggestions, proposals, offers of assistance, and requests for further information are welcomed and should be addressed to Juliet Ucelli, New York Marxist School, 151 West 19th St., New York, New York 10011.

On June 12th, coinciding with the UN General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament, what it is hoped will be the biggest popular antiwar demonstration ever (the "June 12th Rally") will be held in New York City. Focussing on two key demands—*freeze and reverse the arms race,* and *redirect resources from the military to meet human needs*—demonstrators will assemble near the UN at 10 A.M. and march to the Great Lawn in Central Park. Speeches, readings, and music will continue throughout the afternoon. For further information, offers of assistance (financial or otherwise), address the June 12th Rally Committee, 853 Broadway, Suite 2107, New York, NY 10003 (telephone: 212-460-8980).

The 1982 summer conference of the Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE) will be held at the YMCA Camp Chimney Corners, Becket, Massachusetts (near Amherst), August 25-29. The theme of the conference will be "URPE and the Left: Developing Strategies for the 1980s." For details, additional information, etc., write to the URPE national office, 41 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003.

MR readers will want to know about a new handbook entitled *Labor Relations: A Company-Union Guide,* published by Corporate Data Exchange (CDE), an independent tax-exempt research organization formed in 1975 to investigate economic concentration and corporate control. The new handbook presents detailed profiles describing the labor-management relations of 80 *Fortune* 500 corporations. For each firm the study provides general statistics on the workforce and identifies the labor organizations related to the company and its employees through organizing efforts, contract bargaining, and involvement in significant work stoppages. It is available for $25 a copy from Corporate Data Exchange, 189 Broadway, Seventh Floor, New York, NY 10038 (telephone: 212-962-2980).

From time to time we receive a bequest from a reader who felt in his or her lifetime that financial support would help make possible continuance of MR and MR Press as a completely independent magazine and book publisher. Any reader who may be moved to follow this example should be careful to state exactly, in the will, that the bequest is to Monthly Review Foundation, Inc., presently at 62 West 14th St., New York, NY 10011.

To our contributors: When submitting manuscripts, please send two copies and enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Anyone writing to MR or MR Press about subscriptions, bundle orders, or other business matters is requested please not to address communications to the editors: doing so will only delay reply. Write either to the Subscription Department or to MR Press.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Build a socialist library at half-price
by supporting

MONTHLY REVIEW
FOUNDATION ASSOCIATES

Membership entitles you to:

- **A discount of 50% off the list price of any MR Press book.** A $16.00 book for $8.00, or a $5.95 paperback for half price, represents a considerable saving—enough to enable you to buy twice as many books.
- A one-year subscription to *Monthly Review* (if you are already a subscriber we renew your sub automatically).
- A free copy of one of the following new MR Press titles: *And the Poor Get Children: Radical Perspectives on Population Dynamics,* Karen L. Michaelson, editor (list price: $16); *Sandino* by Gregorio Selser (list price: $16); *The Long Default: New York City and the Urban Fiscal Crisis* by William K. Tabb (list price: $16).

That portion of your contribution in excess of $50.00 is deductible in calculating your income tax.

Monthly Review Foundation Associates, 62 W. 14th St., NY, NY 10011

I enclose $_____. Please enroll me as an MR Foundation Associate.

Please send me the free book of my choice from the above list:

_____

☐ I am already a subscriber.
Check category below:

☐ $ 35-$49; £20·50 - £27·50	Supporting Associate
☐ $ 50-$99; £28·50 - £56	Sustaining Associate
☐ $100 and over; £57 and over	Foundation Associate

That portion of your contribution in excess of $50.00 is deductible in calculating your income tax.

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please make check (in U.S. dollars) payable to Monthly Review Foundation. Those who wish to pay in sterling should remit to Monthly Review, 47 The Cut, London SE1 8LL, England (Giro Account No. 5576350)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED